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THE USE OF DIALOGUE JOURNAL WRITING
TO TEACH EFL SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

por

ELISABETE SCHRAMM SZENESZI

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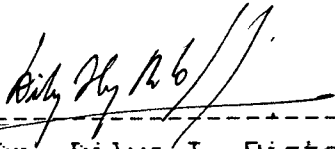
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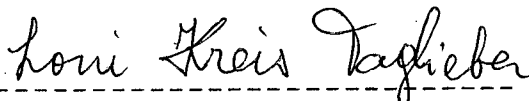
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Opção Inglês e Literatura Correspondente



Prof. Dr. Dilvo I. Ristoff

COORDENADOR




Prof.ª Dra. Loni Kreis Taglieber

ORIENTADORA

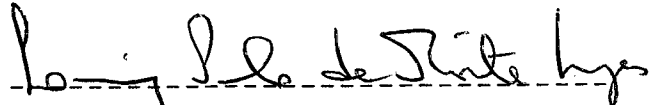
BANCA EXAMINADORA



Prof.ª Dra. Loni Kreis Taglieber



PROF. DR. Hilário I. BOHN



PROF. DR. Luiz Paulo da Moita Lopes

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Aos meus pais

Francisco e Erika

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George

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SUPERVISING PROFESSOR: LONI KREIS TAGLIEBER

A B S T R A C T

This study deals with the use of dialogue journal writing to teach EFL to secondary school students. The purpose of the study was to investigate the effects of dialogue journal writing on Brazilian high school students' motivation towards writing in English and on their ability to write in the foreign language. Fifteen first year high school students of Colégio de Aplicação at Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina participated in the study.

A qualitative approach of research was used in this investigation. The study was carried out during a period of three months, and the results revealed that students changed positively their motivation and attitudes towards learning to write in English, and their writing ability also improved.

R E S U M O

Este estudo trata do uso do "dialogue journal writing" para ensinar inglês como língua estrangeira aos alunos do segundo grau. O objetivo do estudo foi investigar os efeitos do "dialogue journal writing" sobre a motivação e a habilidade de escrita em língua estrangeira dos alunos brasileiros de segundo grau. Quinze alunos da primeira série do segundo grau do Colégio de Aplicação da Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina participaram do estudo.

Um método de abordagem qualitativa foi escolhido para conduzir esta investigação. O estudo foi realizado num período de três meses, e os resultados revelaram que os alunos mudaram positivamente sua motivação e atitudes no aprendizado da escrita em inglês, e também melhoraram suas habilidades de escrita.

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CHAPTER I

1. INTRODUCTION

This work is a description of an exploratory study about the effects of dialogue journal writing in an English as a foreign language (EFL) writing class. The purpose of the study was to investigate the effects of dialogue journal writing on Brazilian high school students' motivation towards writing in English and on their ability to write in the foreign language. The participants in the study were fifteen 9th grade students at Colégio de Aplicação of Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, (SC). A qualitative approach of research was used to conduct the study.

1.1 Rationale

As it can be seen in the literature (White, 1989; Lynch, 1988; Sunderland, Yixing and Barr, 1988; Snow, Met and Genesee, 1989), in the last twenty years there has been much concern about

the improvement of foreign language teaching techniques for all four skills - listening, speaking, reading and writing. Many textbooks and manuals with suggestions as to how to teach a foreign language in an effective way have been published (Hedge, 1985; Gower and Pearson, 1986; Stevick, 1986). Teachers of foreign languages and theoreticians in the area have been engaged in devising efficient classroom techniques for different levels of students, and for different situations and needs of foreign language learning (Paulston and Bruder, 1976; Rivers, 1978; Allen and Vallete, 1976; Chastain, 1976).

In Brazil, many EFL teachers at secondary schools have observed a certain lack of interest of their students in participating in the English class. I myself, during my experience of teaching English to senior high students at Colégio de Aplicação - UFSC, have observed that lack of interest in my students. They seem to be little motivated to learn English and to use it communicatively. Even those who have acquired some knowledge of the "usage" of English feel frustrated when they are asked to "use" the language because they feel they cannot communicate (Widdowson, 1978).

It has been suggested that this demotivation of Brazilian students towards learning English is due, in part, to the fact that in recent years the importance attributed to, and the hours allocated for foreign languages in secondary school curricula have been reduced considerably (Bazzo, 1982). This apparently has had a negative influence on students as well as on teachers.

Another reason might be the EFL programs adopted at secondary

schools. These are for the most part, traditionally product-oriented programs. In other words, they focus on "usage" (form) of the language in opposition to process-oriented programs, which focus on the "use" (function) of the language where the learner is not just a receiver but also a participant in the process of learning. Product-oriented programs leave students with almost no possibility to transfer their knowledge of the foreign language to the world outside (Klippel, 1984). Even if they are able to apply grammatical rules efficiently in real situations they tend to feel insecure to use the language in order to communicate. So it seems that product-oriented programs do not enable students to use the language in real life situations.

On the other hand, it may be difficult to develop process-oriented programs efficiently in foreign language programs of Brazilian elementary and secondary schools. First, because the programs adopted in most schools tend to present few real situations in which it is possible to practice the language communicatively. Second, because the time allotted for foreign language instruction is too short to allow for practice of the foreign language in class. Furthermore, the instructional materials used in the classrooms and the types of tasks assigned to students apparently do very little to improve motivation. In fact, they often seem to decrease motivation. For example, students are frequently asked to read texts that do not interest them, or to write compositions about subjects that are of no relevance to them. Research (Staton, 1983; Ruppert &

Brueggeman, 1986; and others) has indicated that motivation occurs when the learners are included in the process of learning as active participants, taking responsibility for their own learning.

One serious obstacle to students' readiness to communicating in writing, for example, seems to be the great importance that is usually given to evaluation in terms of grading linguistic structures rather than the communication of ideas. This type of teacher behavior does not lead students towards experimenting with the language communicatively. On the contrary, it tends to make them afraid of taking risks, i.e. of making mistakes. By stressing the grading of students' use of language forms, to use Staton's (1983:2) words,

"we transmit to language learners our own concern with form over function in writing and reading, with the surface appearance of language over its meaningful content and students become just receivers of language instead of participants in the process of learning it".

All in all, motivation certainly is an essential ingredient in any learning process. Before getting students directly involved in the learning task, teachers must find ways to motivate them if they expect their students to really learn something. This idea has pervaded the literature during the last thirty years (Ausubel, 1968).

Broughton, Brumfit, Flavel, Hill, and Pincas (1980:47) also cite motivation as a basic principle in all kinds of teaching. Referring to the importance of motivation in language learning, the authors state:

"the student who is satisfied by doing mechanical language exercises correctly has the same superficial motivation as the needlewoman working on samplers, the learner driver operating a simulator or a tyro nurse giving injections to sandbags. The language student is best motivated by practice in which he senses the language is truly communicative, that it is appropriate to its context, that his teacher's skills are moving him forward to a fuller competence in the foreign language".

This is consistent with the idea of "learning by doing" (Dewey, 1971), which has been stressed over and over again in educational literature. What is meant here is, that a learner learns something through practice. As Smith (1978) says, one learns to read through reading and to write through writing in the same way one learns to use a telephone directory through specific practice, not through a lecture. Of course, in the case of learning a foreign language, practice presupposes knowledge of that language. In other words, before a student can be asked to perform in a foreign language, whether through speaking or writing, he or she must have acquired a reasonable amount of knowledge of the language in terms of vocabulary and sentence structures.

In the literature of second language teaching various suggestions as to how to increase students' motivation towards learning and performing in the second language can be found. Among various alternatives, dialogue journal writing has been proposed to increase students' motivation to write (Spack and Sadow, 1983; Sellevaag, 1986). This technique has been defined as a "written conversation between two persons on a functional, continued basis, about topics of individual and even mutual

interest" (Staton, 1983:312). It has also frequently been referred to as written response journal, dialogue on paper or talking on paper (Kelly, 1981), but in essence all these terms refer to an activity in which students write daily or weekly on topics previously discussed, topics obtained through reading, topics suggested by the teacher, or anything that students might want to discuss on paper.

The main purpose of dialogue journal writing is to help students think and develop their ideas clearly as well as to encourage them to express these ideas through writing in a non-threatening environment. Students are expressly told that they needn't be concerned with form and grammar, but only with the clarity of the ideas since their journals will not be graded in the traditional way. The teacher reads them only for meaning, not for form, and then writes a response to the student. In other words, there is no overt correction, but in his/her response to the student the teacher rephrases correctly those structures that the student may have used incorrectly. Thus the teacher's writing may function as a model for students' writing. The idea is not to call directly students' attention to their mistakes. The teacher rephrases sentences, asks questions that lead students towards more thinking, and writes comments that encourage them to feel free and to continue writing.

Dialogue journal writing grew out directly of classroom practice, i.e., it did not develop as a research idea or theory derived technique, as stated in Staton and Kreeft - Peyton (1983). Research on dialogue journal writing is still in its

infancy. There are very few studies conducted with native speakers of English (Jaffer, 1983; Markman, 1984; Murray, 1985) and still fewer with ESL students (Sellevaag, 1986; Staton, 1983; Spack and Sadow, 1983; Kreeft, 1983; whistler, 1984). Even so, the success of dialogue journal writing claimed by teachers who have used it in class to motivate reluctant writers led me to think that this technique might also increase reluctant EFL students' interest and motivation towards writing in English. It was assumed that establishing a classroom environment in which students could freely express their own ideas on topics of their own choices could make them more willing to experiment with communicating in the foreign language. Writing tasks given to students only for the purpose of grading are often taken as a punishment by them. Thus it was expected that the relaxing quality of dialogue journal writing would turn students' writing task more into a pleasure than a punishment. It was also expected that once students became strongly motivated to write, they would write more and, in doing so, the quality of their writing might improve, too.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

In the present study the effects of dialogue journal writing on the motivation towards writing and on the development of writing in English of Brazilian high school students were investigated.

1.3. Research Questions

The following research questions have been posited for the present study.

Along the process of investigation, has there been observed :

- a) an increase of interest on the part of students to learn to write in English?
- b) an increase in students' motivation to participate in the activity of journal writing?
- c) an improvement in students' writing with regard to content organization, cohesion and coherence?

1.4. Objectives of the Study

In order to achieve the purpose established for this study, the following objectives were set:

- to arouse students' interest and motivation for writing in English through dialogue journal writing.
- to promote students' motivation for learning English.
- to promote teacher/student, student/teacher and student/student interaction.
- to increase students' participation in their process of learning.
- to improve students' writing in English.
- to contribute to the teaching techniques of writing in EFL for secondary schools.

1.5. Importance and Limitation of the Study

EFL teachers in general are worried about improving their classes in terms of learning efficacy. Therefore they are

constantly reviewing and adapting new techniques and methodologies in order to make the teaching of English as efficient as possible. This study may make contributions towards improving the teaching of English as a foreign language in terms of teacher-student interaction and students' participation in their process of learning. Another, and perhaps the most relevant aspect of this study is that it is research about teaching and learning, thus not speculative, but centered on the actual teaching/learning process in the classroom. As to the technique of dialogue journal writing, it may serve as an instrument for teachers of EFL and of other foreign languages to motivate their students to write in the foreign language. Finally, the data obtained through this study may be useful for further research, i.e., other researchers may look at these data from other points of view. Moita Lopes (1988) conducted research in which he used a qualitative approach as an attempt to study the learning of a foreign language (English) by secondary students in a Brazilian secondary school. As Moita Lopes comments, applied linguists are more and more adopting paradigms of a qualitative base to investigate topics concerning the learning of language because such methods give access to data which reveal more about questions concerning the use of language than models of quantitative research. Yet, since this is the first study to investigate dialogue journal writing with Brazilian secondary school students of EFL, the results must be taken with caution.

In the next chapter a review of relevant literature will be presented.

C H A P T E R II

2. Review of Relevant Literature

Studies in the area of foreign language teaching have shown that the teaching of Foreign Language in many parts of the world needs improvement (Abbot, 1987; Markham, 1987). Programs, seminars, conferences suggesting new methods and techniques as a means of helping teachers improve their English classes have been held in many countries.

Some studies have focused on EFL teaching and learning in secondary schools, (Markham, 1987; Sensenbaugh, 1990; and others) and those studies have shown that it is necessary to make an effort to devise new methods and techniques to teach English in the classrooms as well as to find out ways to teach EFL that foster students' interest in learning English. However this is a very difficult task because it involves a number of factors concerning teachers' preparation and their wish to innovate as well as students' interest and motivation to learn.

As to students' learning of something new or different, this

requires also some preparation on the students' part in the sense that they accept the proposed activity. For such, students need to be motivated, otherwise, it will be very difficult to get students' attention, interest, and participation in the learning task.

As regards students' learning process Markham (1987:219) says:

"Studying a foreign language is an extremely arduous, cumulative learning process. For a variety of reasons many students become lost early in the course of instruction. As a result, these students frequently contribute to discipline problems out of frustration or simply because of a lack of sustaining interest."

In Brazil, in fact, the situation of EFL teaching in secondary schools is not very different from that of the secondary schools in general. A study done by Souza (1984), reveals that the teaching of foreign languages in Brazilian secondary schools is in a crisis, due to the lack of a clear definition of the objectives of EFL teaching in relation to the other subject areas in the curriculum, as well as to the content in terms of linguistic, pedagogical and cultural objectives. Only two studies (Souza's, 1984, and Bazzo's, 1982) concerning the EFL teaching in Brazilian secondary schools were found.

Research findings have indicated that the ability to write effectively is not innate even in native language, and therefore it must be learned and practiced more and more, in the native as well as in a second and in a foreign language (Saxenian, 1988; Pyle, 1990; Freeman and Kasten, 1990).

While reviewing the literature about writing, it was seen

that writing in English is one of the least understood and researched areas in the traditional EFL curriculum, and to use Walter's (1983:17) words, "... it is the last and most difficult skill students learn - if they ever do". According to the author, foreign language teachers question themselves when they should start teaching writing and whether they should start by approaching it through free composition, sentence combining or some kind of functional approach.

In the last fifteen years, there have been various attempts at devising techniques for helping students to improve writing such as sentence combining, cloze procedure, guided composition, free composition, etc. (Walters, 1983; Sensenbaugh, 1990; Dolly, 1990). Another technique frequently used to develop writing is "dialogue journal writing", which consists of a daily or a weekly conversation on paper between students and teacher about topics of individual or mutual interest. This activity may last for the entire school semester or the entire course (Staton, 1983 ; Kelly, 1981).

Until 1979, dialogue journal writing was known only as a classroom technique, but in the beginning of the 1980's researchers started to become interested in this type of activity (Staton, Shuy and Kreeft, 1982). Since then it has been recommended even more strongly as an effective device to develop writing as well as reading competence (Reed, 1982; Staton, 1982). It has been used as a classroom technique with native and second language learners at elementary and secondary (Manning, Manning, and Hughes, 1987; Bode, 1989; Kreeft, 1984; Simpson, 1986) and

college levels (Markman, 1984; Sellevaag, 1986 Frager and Malena, 1986).

A search through the relevant literature has revealed some research on dialogue journal writing with native speakers of English (Jaffer, 1983; Markman, 1984; Murray, 1985); with students of ESL (Sellevaag, 1986; Staton, 1981; Spack and Sadow, 1983; Kreeft, 1983; Whistler, 1984). Yet, only one study with students of EFL in Brazil was found (Miccoli, 1987).

In order to illustrate how dialogue journal writing was used as a technique to improve writing in the classroom, some examples will be described below.

Murray (1985) used dialogue journal writing in a "special needs" school with low income students. The students were children who, according to the teacher, neither had any knowledge of the alphabet or sound/symbol relationships nor could they recognize their names in print. These children wrote in the journals everyday and the teacher observed that they gradually progressed through the stages of using simple sound, letters and scribbles to using vowels and soon they began writing words and sentences, discovering in this way that they could communicate through the written word. Murray's main objective was to stimulate writing. In her written answer, which was seen as a "message" by the children, she used to include a question which led them to expand on a topic. Murray concluded that each class in which the dialogue journals were used constituted an opportunity for evaluation that could be turned into a "tailor-made" lesson with specific objectives. Also, through dialogue journal writing each child received the lesson he/she needed for

a particular day.

Another person who used dialogue journal writing as a classroom technique was Simpson (1986). She used an integrated approach of reading and writing through oral reading and writing response journals with native American seventh grade language Arts students in American public schools. Simpson chose a book of students' interest and read to them every class. Her main objectives were to share literature with students by making them write responses and asking them to comment orally on the reading. The results of this experiment indicated that besides working as a teaching tool, the journals may be a means of developing students' thinking and writing as well as a way of enhancing comprehension and enjoyment of reading.

Spack and Sadow (1983:578-591) used dialogue journals with students of ESL Freshman Composition courses, as a regular activity and as an integral part of their classes. Their objective was to change the emphasis in writing from the written product to the writing process i.e., the students were not asked to fit a topic into a rhetorical form according to some model previously studied, but they were given the opportunity to do more expressive and reflexive writing and there was no concern with form. As the authors mention, "We read the paper for ideas and make suggestions for further development and changes in content, organization and vocabulary". Student and teacher worked together in a process of solving problems and answering questions which arose out of the writings.

In this case, students shared their journal entries with the group in order to enrich interaction as well as to exchange

ideas. As they were in college, these students were asked to write about a page or two per class, on topics they had already read about or previously discussed in class, as well as about excerpts from their journals. The authors found that dialogue journal writing may benefit students in the sense that "they better understand the purpose of writing - to explore, develop, focus, organize, and finally to share ideas with others".

Markman (1984:6) also used dialogue journal writing with college students as part of the Composition course. Students had to write weekly in their journals about course assignments, activities, writing attitudes and concerns as well as about specific writing problems and strategies for their solution. The author's objective was to help students develop positive attitudes towards writing and confidence in their ability to have a good performance. Markman concluded that the use of dialogue journal writing was a way of drawing students' attention towards writing. Also, it encouraged teachers to become active writers inside the classroom as well as models of current writing. Another positive fact pointed out by the author was the permanent and personal interaction between students and teacher which permitted the teacher to more closely monitor her students' needs. As the author states, "in this way, they can better satisfy the social and individual nature of classroom writing instruction".

Sellevaag (1986) used dialogue journal writing in an ESL writing course at a Community College. Students wrote weekly in their journals for twenty minutes each time and, as both students and teacher enjoyed what each other had written, the author

decided to analyze those students' journals. Sellevaag's objective was to see what was happening concerning students' writing development and attitude towards writing in English when students were asked to write in their journals. The author concluded that dialogue journal writing helped students improve their ability in writing in at least three meaningful ways. First, the journals gave the students an opportunity to increase their overall fluency. They wrote more with fewer grammatical errors; second, students had the opportunity to express their personal ideas and receive feedback from their teacher; and third students had the opportunity to reflect with their teacher about their writing and about themselves as writers. Also, in their writings, students discussed their difficulties in writing and their wish to improve their writing skill.

Frager and Malena (1986) used journal writing with students in college to diagnose several types of problems these students had in school concerning study habits and reading skills. These problems, according to the authors, were difficult to identify via formal reading tests, but through students journals several types of difficulties could be diagnosed such as emotional factors, lack of information about what a proper study setting would be, misconception about reading and writing, and others. Subjects were asked to focus their writing on their school work, their thoughts and feelings about studying, and other things that might be causing success or failure in their learning. The authors concluded that simple verbalization of their own problems helped students overcome some of the most important problems

concerning the teaching/learning process of writing. Such problems are mainly those in which on the one hand the teacher has the role of fostering students' motivation and interest towards writing and on the other hand students are waiting for some activity which will make them feel motivated to learn to write. This activity has helped students improve their ability in writing (Sellevaag, 1986; Spack and Sadow, 1983; Simpson, 1986). Also, through the use of dialogue journal writing, both students and teachers can assess their roles, i.e., students can assess themselves as writers writing to their teachers who represent their audience; and teachers can assess themselves as models of writing to students, trying to use current writing, which may serve as a guide for students (Sellevaag, 1986; Murray, 1985). The relevant literature reveals that besides enhancing comprehension and enjoyment, dialogue journal writing also fosters students's positive attitudes not only towards writing, but also towards the other integrated skills such as reading, thinking, listening and understanding (Markman, 1984; Simpson, 1986; Spack and Sadow, 1983).

In addition to teachers' reports about the use of dialogue journal writing as a simple classroom technique, studies have also been done in order to investigate the effects of dialogue journal writing on students' attitudes and ability concerning writing in English, particularly with native speakers of English (Jaffer 1983; Manning, Manning and Huges, 1987; Bode, 1989), and with ESL students (Kreeft, 1983; Whistler, 1984). However, only one study concerning EFL (Miccoli, 1987) was found. Some of the

studies cited above will be described below to verify what researchers found concerning the use of dialogue journal writing.

The first study to be discussed was done by Jaffer (1983) who examined the role of dialogue journal writing in the development of children's awareness of audience. The subjects were first and second graders. Their ages ranged from six to eight years. The author concluded that because of the supportive immediate feedback provided by the dialogue journal writing, those children developed a sense of audience in their writings. This fact caused students to move from informal writing to a more formal writing or, to use the author's words, "to a more contextualized text".

Another study with children was conducted by Manning, Manning and Hughes (1987:312) who used dialogue journal writing with first grade children. The purpose of the study was to examine the effects of journal writing on the children's writing and to see what they would choose to put in their journals without receiving any suggestions for topics. Students were encouraged to write daily during a period of one year. The authors noticed that all the students wrote in their journals from the very beginning of the year until the end without losing interest in the activity. Some of the children started with pictures, scribbles or letter strings with no letter-sound correspondence in the beginning, but as the authors state: "Regardless of the level of their writing development, they all wrote and were confident of their own writing abilities". It was also observed that as the children became more confident and proficient with their writings, the drawings usually followed rather than preceded the writings which might not be considered the natural sequence in

learning to write where children usually first draw, then write.

The findings of this study suggest that if children are given the opportunity, even in the first year of school, they will be able to write in journals and to select their own topics, as well. They will do it with enjoyment and will gain more confidence in the writing skill during that period.

Still, another study with first grade children was conducted by Bode (1987) where either teachers wrote to their students or parents wrote to their own children at home in a dialogue journal. The objective of this study was to make children learn the functional use of language. Those children wrote daily as the first activity in the morning for fifteen to twenty minutes each time. The results of this study indicated that using dialogue journal writing, children are free to learn about literacy in an integrative manner. They showed interest and pleasure in having personalized written communication with their teacher. The author also found that the journals constitute a way to make both teacher and students more motivated to teach and to learn at the elementary level of education.

Among studies about the use of dialogue journal writing done with ESL students, Kreeft (1983) examined students acquisition of grammatical structures through dialogue journals. The author analyzed the journals of sixth-grade students learning ESL. Students were all from different countries and had been in the U.S. for less than one year when they started attending the classes. The dialogue journals were used as a supplementary activity in which students used to write during their free time

throughout the day. In this type of journal the topics were of the students' choice. Each morning those students received the teacher's response written the night before. It seemed that the use of the dialogue journals influenced students' acquisition of new patterns and structures of English. The author suggests that the more students try to communicate, the more language is required from them, and that in this way they will learn more language in the process.

Whistler (1984) did a case study with dialogue journal writing. He examined the use of dialogue journal writing as a means of encouraging a bilingual student to write cohesively. He analyzed the effects of the dialogue journal of an unmotivated Mexican fifth grade student for a period of one semester. As a result of the frequent writings, apparently there were positive changes in this student's performance and attitudes towards writing. The author attributed this result to the fact that the student had to write to an audience physically separated from him - the teacher - who asked for clarification whenever necessary; and to the fact that dialogue journal writing involved real communication between teacher and student, which led the student to be more careful in conveying his ideas. Thus the findings suggest that the journals improved the student's writing skill as well as changed his attitude towards writing in English.

Only one study on the use of dialogue journal writing with EFL students was found in the literature. Miccoli (1987) analyzed Brazilian EFL college students' use of dialogue journal writing. The main objective of this study was to obtain feedback from students about the teaching/learning process in their class

and also to give students an opportunity of discussing EFL teaching problems. Another objective in this study was to obtain information about what could be affecting the students learning process. This study was carried out with thirty six EFL undergraduate students at Faculdade de Letras, Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, for a period of one year. Those students wrote in their journals as class assignments and, in this case, dialogue journal writing was used not as a means of improving writing, but mainly as a means of discussing the teaching/learning process.

The author concluded that dialogue journal writing can be used as a "communication channel" between teacher and students. She also found that through the use of dialogue journal writing, students moved from a passive to an active attitude towards their process of learning. And finally, it seemed that those students understood the importance of their role as learners.

This brief review of the literature on dialogue journal writing has revealed that in general this activity had a positive effect on students' performance in writing as well as on their attitudes towards writing. Based on these observations and findings, it was supposed that dialogue journal writing might also be a way to increase Brazilian high school students' motivation for learning to write in English and to improve their ability to write in the foreign language. It was assumed that students would start writing with some errors, but as they become more comfortable with their teacher and with the language and more interested in the topics, they would use new

vocabulary, write more cohesively, use more complex sentences, becoming in this way more daring and creative . In addition, it was expected that the interaction that would build up between students and teacher in the form of a written dialogue could help develop students' confidence, and thereby improve their communicative competence in English.

Because of the positive results reported in previous studies on dialogue journal writing with native speakers of English, and because of the dearth of research on dialogue journal writing with students of EFL, the present study was designed in order to investigate whether and how dialogue journal writing affects the writing of students at a Brazilian secondary school.

The present study was based on Whistler's (1984) and on Kreeft's (1983) studies; and mainly on Sellevaag's (1986) who used dialogue journal writing as a classroom technique. The methodology used in this study will be presented in detail in the next chapter.

CHAPTER III

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Design of the Study

The present study is exploratory in nature. It was designed to investigate, describe and analyze the process of secondary students' acquisition of writing skills in English through the writing of dialogue journals. The investigation consisted essentially of observing students' learning to write through the use of dialogue journal writing and of observing their attitudes towards writing in the foreign language. The methodology used to develop this study was based on a qualitative research approach.

Qualitative research has become an important alternative to the more traditional experimental methodologies in educational research since the 1950's (Chein, 1948; Spradley, 1980; Kamil, Langer and Shanahan, 1985; Watson & Gegeo, 1988). One of the major advantages of qualitative research over laboratory experimental research in education, claimed by researchers, is

its ecological validity, i.e., the fact that findings of research carried out in natural settings can be more easily transferred to real learning situations than findings from laboratory experimental research (Brody, 1984). A very important book dealing with research in the classroom has just been published (Olson, 1990).

Qualitative research has the following characteristics:

a) It is research undertaken at the action level to improve practices. It is developed in the field where either a change is desired or an innovation can be tested. It is also developed in natural setting rather than in laboratory.

b) It is considered as an evolving plan of research and action (Foshay, 1953); where cycles formed by research and action are in a continuous process of evolution permitting the continuous adaptation of objectives and plans of action to the reality of the social system in each cycle of research. Thus, research and action are intrinsically associated one influencing the other in an evolutive process (Szeneszi, 1982).

c) It is "phenomenologic" in the sense that systematic registers of practices and experiences and their results are done throughout the research in order to know how the social reality and its components react to the changes brought about by the research.

d) The researcher is a participant observer in the study where s/he can obtain the possible details about the things that may be occurring in the setting where the research is being carried out. In other words, the researcher is present and

interacting with the subjects in the proper field of study.

e) Finally, and most important of all, unlike quantitative research, which leads to a particularized view of the process studied, qualitative research leads to a holistic view. In other words, while in quantitative research the researcher focuses on one or more variables of the problem being studied, in qualitative research, throughout the investigation, the researcher always has in his mind the whole process of the problem that is being investigated. And this seems to be one of the major reasons why qualitative research has come to be considered a better alternative than quantitative research in the social sciences, and mainly in education (Day, 1990). In quantitative research isolated variables of a problem are investigated. In the social sciences, however, in the end these isolated variables become meaningless, i.e., they no longer mean anything in regard to the whole of which they are a part. Quantitative research deals with the final product, the final quantity or value of a particular variable. Qualitative research, on the other hand, does not deal with isolated variables in the first place, but with "blocks" of variables - categories that make up a new whole, and this allows a more global view of the larger whole. A qualitative approach, therefore, is more adaptable to the various phases of studying a process, such as learning to write in English.

In Brazil, the qualitative research approach has been used in the social sciences (Szenészi, 1982; Thiollent, 1986; and others) and mainly in education (Bazzo, 1982; Ludke e André, 1986), and in applied linguistics (Miccoli, 1987; Moita Lopes, 1988 ; and

others). More recently studies concerning the teaching of English have also employed the qualitative approach.

In qualitative research, hypotheses have a role, but they are not as fixed as in experimental research. The initial research question or questions may be changed during the unfolding of the investigation (Herrmann, 1987; and others). After each instance of observation and analysis of the situation under study, the researcher refines his initially superficial question until he arrives at the specific question he wants to focus on. The researcher starts out with a general question, for example, "What is going on here?". He makes a detailed record of everything he observes in the situation he intends to study, and the categories emerge from this record. For each instance of observation the researcher records: the physical surroundings, arrangement of physical objects in the space, the actors or participants' behavior, verbatim language, acts, time sequence, gestures, etc....(Spradley, 1980). After the first survey of the social situation, the researcher returns to the field in order to study exhaustively specific aspects of the social situation, particularly those that appear more consistently. This will be repeated as many times as will be necessary to answer the question posed by the study (Domingues and Domingues, in press).

There are several procedures for collecting data that are used in qualitative research, but the most commonly used according to Watson - Gegeo (1988) are:

a) unstructured observation - in a personal notebook, the researcher writes down subjects' reactions to what is seen or

heard in the whole context . These are subjective observations that will be registered in a form of personal diary, which will serve as data for the analysis.

b) participant observation - the researcher within the group describes and analyzes detailed interactional patterns occurring among the subjects under study.

c) formal and informal interviewing of the participants - the formal interview is done through direct questions about the activity which the subjects are asked to answer and, the informal interview is done through informal questions the researcher asks the subjects. This informal interview is recorded and later transcribed for the analysis.

d) audio or video taping of interactions - the researcher records and /or films the whole situation in order to have a better view of the interactions that occur during the research.

e) collecting of relevant or available documents - those are protocols with additional information about the subjects under study such as nationality, socio-cultural levels and other relevant information that the institution may have and which may contribute to the final analysis of the data. Of course, besides these, other techniques for data collecting may be used, depending on the research question/s posed by a given study.

Obviously, qualitative research approaches also have flaws. In qualitative research, if the researcher is at the same time the instructor of the subjects and the researcher, as in the case of teachers researching their own students, there may be some inherent difficulties. First, the teacher may have to pay

attention to too many things at the same time . This may happen, for example, if the teacher-researcher decides to use a technique which requires the use of a camera to film students while they are working with the proposed activity. He or she may have to pay more attention to the machine than to students. Another difficulty that may arise while using such a device is that it may inhibit the shy students. Finally, there is the conflict between being a teacher and a researcher. It is difficult to pay attention to students to help them in their learning process and record the whole process at the same time (Herrmann, 1987). On the other hand, there are also some advantages in the teacher-researcher model. One of them is that the teacher has the flexibility of addressing pedagogical problems as they happen in the classroom. Also, being a conductor of the study, the teacher can reformulate the research questions as many times as he/she finds it necessary. (Herrmann, 1987; Nunan, 1990). Finally, and probably the most positive aspect in this kind of approach is that the teacher being at the same time teacher and researcher, is dealing with the teaching/learning processes, not only with the product. As Liebmann- Kleine (1987:105) states:

"The essential assumption of process theory and teaching from its beginning, has been that learners are different. ... If processes differ, then the role of process teachers is not to impose a process, but to perceive their students' differences and then assess each one's particular needs. ... In order to do this, teachers must become researchers .

There were two reasons why a qualitative aproach was chosen for the present study. First, because of its characteristics

(previously described in this study) which make it a more appropriate approach than the quantitative approach for the type of investigation intended - a study of the process of learning to write in a foreign language. Second, because of its practical aspect, the fact that the research can be conducted in the actual classroom, permitting the investigator to be at the same time teacher and researcher.

3.2. Subjects

Fifteen first-year high school students of Colégio de Aplicação, UFSC, were chosen to participate in the study. These students were taken from a class of twenty-eight students, all enrolled in EFL classes. The subjects were selected in the following way:

On the first day of the investigation a writing test was given to the twenty-eight students. The teacher-researcher asked them to write for twenty minutes on a topic selected by each student among three choices given to them previously. When students finished, the compositions were collected and checked by the teacher-researcher for clarity of content, organization, and cohesion and coherence. Next, the papers were graded according to those aspects of writing examined, and then, based on their scores, students were classified into levels of achievement - good - average - and poor. After that five students from each of the three levels were chosen at random to compose the group of subjects to participate in the study. Although all twenty-eight students wrote journals during the investigation, in the final analysis of the data only the journals written by those fifteen

students were taken into consideration.

It should be pointed out that there are two things in this sample selection procedure which are not consistent with the methodology used in this study: the selection itself, which is typical of quantitative research, and the group of subjects selected, which is only part of the group of students in the class the investigation was conducted. This diminishes the ecological validity of the study, i.e. the power to translate its findings directly into practice. Yet, because of time limit in this study the data to be analyzed had to be reduced to a manageable amount to permit an appropriate description and analysis. Thus, the procedure of sample selection used, was an attempt at approximating the group of subjects as much as possible to a naturally formed group, in other words, to avoid having a group of only good, average, or poor writers take part in the investigation.

3.3. Research Procedures

This research was guided by the following modified version of Spradley's (1980) design of research (see fig. 1 on p.36). In this model, research is conducted by following the steps within the cyclical process in sequence as many times as are necessary for the researcher to arrive at conclusions, or answers to the research questions raised during the process. Below follows an explanation of the model, which is, at the same time, an explanation of the way in which it was applied to this research. Thus, the steps of this investigation can be understood in the

following way :

a) Starting point.

As the starting point, the researcher establishes what the research will be about. In the present study, this step consisted of the researcher's decision to do the study on the use of dialogue journal writing in the EFL classroom. This decision was made after having reviewed the literature about previous studies in this area.

b) Limiting the project.

At this point, the researcher defines the content of the research as well as the subjects whom he/she is going to work with. Thus, the present study deals with one of the four skills of English as a foreign language - writing. More specifically it concerns itself with secondary EFL students' acquisition of the writing skill through the activity of dialogue journal writing.

c) Definition of the problem. (New) research questions .

The question formulated for this study was "what happens concerning secondary EFL students' attitudes towards learning to write in English and concerning the development of the writing skill when they are asked to write dialogue journals? " This more general question was reformulated as the process of investigation went on. New questions were formulated several times until the final research questions, as stated in chapter I, emerged.

d) Definition of the instruments for data collection.

In this step, the researcher establishes the instruments for collecting the data. Thus, for the present study the following instruments were used to collect the data: (1) attitudes inventory ; (2) participant observation; (3) informal and formal interviewing of the participants; and (4) collection of students written journals. In addition to these instruments the researcher also recorded unstructured observations and students' personal reactions to what was seen or heard inside and sometimes outside the classroom. Although these were emotional responses, they were expected to help the researcher make associations with the more objective data and perhaps add to the explanation of certain outcomes.

1) Attitudes inventory - an attitudes inventory in the form of a questionnaire was administered to subjects in the beginning and at the end of the research (app.1). This inventory consisted of multiple choice questions about students' motivation towards learning to write in English and towards the technique of dialogue journal writing. Two open questions were also asked so that students could express their ideas more subjectively. These questions were analyzed and compared at the end of the study to check whether students' motivation to learn to write in English had changed as a result of practicing journal writing. Yet this inventory was used informally, i.e., without concern with statistical validation.

2) Participant observation - the teacher-researcher observed and wrote down students' attitudes and behavior while they were

writing their journals (app.8). This record consisted of such things as types of questions students asked (pertinent or not to the task); whether they asked them in English or in Portuguese; whether students started to write immediately or not; the time they took to write in their journals; students' reactions before, during, and after writing in their journals. The teacher's reactions concerning students' attitudes, as well as her own behavior, experiences and problems, or mistakes that came up during the investigation, were also recorded. These last observations were later registered in more detail in a personal diary.

3) Formal and informal interviews with students about their attitudes towards this activity and about their development concerning writing in English - the formal interview was done through a direct question the teacher-researcher asked students in written form on which they had to focus in their journals on a particular day (app.5). The informal interview was recorded during students' classes, and it dealt with the same topic as the formal one (app.4). In addition, students were asked to criticize or to give suggestions about the writing activity. The interview was later transcribed from the tape.

4) The collection of students' samples of journal writing - the journals were written in class about topics of the students' choice every two classes for twenty minutes. Later, the journals were read by the teacher-researcher who then responded to each of them in writing. No formal correction was performed and no grades were given. Correction was performed in an indirect

way, i.e., through the teacher's responses to students' writings. Each student wrote a total of ten entries, and all of them were taken into account for the analysis of the data.

In order to verify whether students were improving their competence in writing in English, some specific points such as: clarity; logical sequence of ideas; well-connected sentences; well-structured sentences (Simple or complex); well-organized sentences; use of appropriate linking words use of adequate vocabulary as regards to context; use of new words or phrases were observed and registered by the teacher-researcher when responding to students' journals. All these aspects were observed and registered on an individual card for each student. Every time the teacher-researcher read students' entries, she marked what aspects were more evident in students' entries. A sample of the card can be seen in appendix 10.

5) Analysis of data - The purpose of the study was to find out whether students's practice of dialogue journal writing would affect their motivation towards writing in English and their ability to write in English. Therefore, the data consisted of two types of information: (1) information referring to students' attitudes towards writing in English as a result of practicing writing through dialogue journal writing; (2) information referring to students' writing quality. The final analysis of the data was performed in the following way: each of the two blocks of information was analyzed according to one major category and some subcategories related to the major ones in connection with the research questions of the study. These categories emerged through a preliminary analysis of the data

and through observations of the whole process made and registered during the investigation. Thus, the data were analyzed according to the major category **Classroom Environment** and the following three subcategories: classroom management, interaction, and motivation, basic elements in a learning situation. The data referring to students's writing were analyzed according to the major category **Students'writing Progress** and the following subcategories: content, organization, cohesion and coherence, important aspects of written text. All these categories of analysis are explained in more detail in the following chapter in which the discussion and analysis of the data itself are presented.

C H A P T E R I V

4. Analysis and Interpretation of the Data

4.1.1 Introduction to Categories of Analysis

This chapter contains the analysis and discussion of the data obtained through the various instruments of collecting data used in this study. In order to provide this analysis and interpretation with a certain organization, or frame, categories of analysis were established.

First, all data were analyzed according to the category "Classroom environment" and the subcategories classroom management, classroom interaction and motivation.

Second, students' samples of writing, that is, their written journals were analyzed according to the category "Students' writing progress" and to the subcategories content, organization, cohesion and coherence, which are considered essential qualities of good writing (Wyrick, 1978; Zamel, 1983; Yule, 1987; and others).

These categories of analysis were established through a preliminary analysis of: (1) the students' journals; (2) the teacher-researcher's observations made while students were writing in their journals in the classroom; (3) the data obtained through the formal and informal interviews given to students; (4) the data obtained through the inventory administered to subjects before and after the investigation and (5) the observation of the development of students' writing along the investigation.

The development of students' writing was observed through the analyses of students' journals during the investigation where some aspects concerning content and form were observed. As it was previously explained, each student had a card where the teacher-researcher recorded aspects of content and form every time students wrote. However, as this study concentrated on writing as a process of communication, the aspects concerning form were not analyzed in detail. The development of students' writing was looked at mainly in terms of content, not form. Thus, students' inclusions of new topics and/or communication of more new ideas in each of succeeding journal were considered improvement in writing.

Finally, the result of these analyses was then: (a) compared to the findings of previous studies on dialogue journal writing discussed in the review of the relevant literature; (b) checked against the research questions proposed for the present study in order to see whether they have been answered; and (c) checked against the objectives of the present study.

4.2 Classroom Environment

The environment of a classroom is composed of several aspects, but classroom management, classroom interaction and motivation seem to be basic elements. Good management, good interaction and motivation usually result in an environment in the classroom that is conducive to learning, regardless of what subject is being taught.

However, discipline is also necessary to establish a classroom environment that is conducive to learning. Students need to be guided towards discipline inside the classroom. In most cases in secondary school, the teacher is responsible for the monitoring of such discipline. So, effective classroom management depends also on the teacher's behavior in the classroom and his attitude towards students. For example, the teacher has to have clear objectives for his/her class and must show security in transmitting knowledge to students. But there are still other factors which can contribute to an environment in the classroom in which learning can occur. Among these are students' interest and motivation to participate in the learning task. Thus one might say that an effective classroom environment is the result of a combination of things that together help students achieve success in learning, and effective classroom management, classroom interaction, and students' motivation for learning are probably three of these things that make up an effective classroom environment.

4.2.1 Classroom Management

In foreign language education, as in any other class, classroom management determines the type of interaction and discipline that may be occurring in the classroom as well as students' self respect and respect for others in the same academic setting (Markham, 1987).

Classroom management in the present study involves discipline, i.e., students and teacher self respect and respect for others in the classroom. It also involves interaction between teacher/students, students/teacher, and students/students during the activities inside the classroom.

However, classroom management in the foreign language class, in general has been a problematic issue due to the lack of motivation students have for learning English. EFL teachers in Brazil have to deal with this complex subject, due to a number of difficulties these teachers have to cope with. One of these difficulties, for example, is the traditional character of the classes, which are centered on the teacher rather than on students. Another obstacle is conservatism a characteristic of the entire Brazilian educational system. Based on a set of strict and formal rules, it limits students' participation in the classroom. Thus, most Brazilian students see the teacher as the center of the whole teaching/learning process, i.e. the one who conveys information and the one who makes decisions. (Mackenzie, 1990).

Although the students who took part in the present study suffer direct influences from such a system, in this

investigation they were considered the center and focus of attention by the teacher-researcher. Through some previous classes they were informed about the investigation and encouraged to participate in a new type of activity in which they themselves and everything they wanted to write about would be considered the most important elements. Students' reaction to this was very positive. They showed great curiosity towards the proposed writing activity and accepted the idea promptly, showing in this way interest in the writing task.

The first sign that students were interested in taking part in the activity can be observed through the teacher-researcher's personal notes. Every time students were asked to write in the journals, the teacher noticed active participation of the majority of students. They started to write almost immediately after receiving the journals back or just after solving their doubts concerning the use of some new vocabulary the teacher had used in her answers to their journals.

Another sign of deep involvement, for example, was the time students took to write. They were given twenty minutes to write, and it was observed that almost all students finished writing within the time established. Also, students were cooperative working silently, trying to concentrate on their writing activity. In other words, it was not difficult to keep discipline. whenever a doubt arose they either asked each other or they resorted to the teacher for clarification without disturbing the class.

Still another factor which showed that students were involved

in the activity was their curiosity in reading what the teacher-researcher had written in response to their entries. Curiosity is one of the most important motives for learning (McKeachie, 1978). Some students did not ask any questions and started writing immediately, others asked the teacher for some clarification and soon started writing, too. A more detailed description of students' reactions while writing their journals can be seen in the registers in appendix no.8.

The teacher's attitude towards students' needs for being understood and accepted apparently made students feel free to write, i. e., they felt that they could concern themselves with the communication of their ideas rather than with form. It also seems to have encouraged them to ask and answer questions, give suggestions, or to participate in conversations during classroom activity; and finally, the relaxed atmosphere established through the absence of grading might have contributed to students deep involvement in the writing activity.

More evidence of students' involvement in the writing task can be seen in some students' journal entries which will be described below. For example, student E. in her entry wrote:

"About the journals, I Think they don't have any problem. I like very much to write in them....I can write in my journal something that I want. ... I can write free...."

Student Z. wrote:

"The "journal" is a new and interesting activity for us. With this we can improve our writing without preoccupation with the grade. I think it is a good opportunity to write better, principally because we wrote about what we wanted to."

Student B. wrote:

" ... All points of journal are interesting. ... I think that you should keep on with the "Dialogue Journal Writing" because it's great. I feel very good during this time of journal... I believe That I learned very much in this time. "

In the examples above students show in their writings that they liked the activity, they felt "free" to write and that the journals were an important activity . To a certain extent, they expressed what Krashen's (1982) hypothesis of language acquisition demands in terms of necessary prerequisites for an optimal language input. One of the prerequisites is that language be **comprehensible**. In the present study, the language directed to students by the teacher-researcher was comprehensible to them since they all wrote back and, if they did not understand what the teacher had written, they felt free to ask either orally in class while they were writing in their journals or through written questions in their entries. Another aspect in Krashen's theory is that the input must be **interesting** and/or **relevant** to the acquirer. As it was observed in students' journals, they wrote that this activity was interesting to them and important in their learning (see app.5).

4.2.2 Classroom Interaction

As pointed out previously, interaction is also an important element which contributes to an effective classroom environment.

As a matter of fact depending on the teacher's directing of the class, interaction will or will not occur. In the present study,

interaction was seen from a social, pedagogical, and psychological point of view. It was assumed that if students were led to cooperate with the teacher and with each other, if they were led to have an effective understanding of the proposed activity, and if the classroom atmosphere was such that they could feel they were important to the teacher (who was their principal audience), interaction as well as learning should occur.

Interaction in the language classroom has been approached by applied linguists as a crucial element in learning and in getting students to communicate. It is the key factor in the generation of comprehensible input (Pica, Young and Dought, 1987; Allwright, 1984 and Lier, 1984).

Some authors have stressed the importance of effective participation of the teacher in promoting interaction in the classroom (Coulthard, 1975; Lier, 1984), others have suggested that this should be the role of both teachers and students. These claim that if students are given the opportunity to participate actively in the classroom activities, they may assume the responsibility for their own learning (Harmartz, 1987; Allwright, 1984, McKenzie, 1990). All these authors agree that both students and teacher must interact positively in order to facilitate the process of communication in the classroom if a classroom environment that is conducive to learning is expected.

Several patterns of interaction in the classroom have been identified by researchers over the years, but the two patterns relevant to the discussion of this study are: (1) the more

traditional teacher - student - teacher (T-S-T) pattern of interaction (Sinclair and Coulthard, 1975). In this pattern the teacher, who already knows the answer, first does the elicitation; the student in turn gives the response and then the teacher again, as a form of following-up, tells how acceptable the answer was; and (2) the negotiation pattern in which teacher and student agree on what is going to be done in order to develop reciprocal interaction. Allright's (1984:160) example demonstrates how this kind of interaction may occur:

"T- OK., tomorrow we've got interviews
Lu- What? And test?
T- Yeah, we've got the test.
Si- We can make interviews today, some?
T- Why? We don't have time, Si.
Si- Well
T- Oh, too late now!
L- Oh
T- No, you're not going to have interviews. And there won't be any grammar tomorrow, and I think the newspaper probably won't come out until Monday.
L- OK."

Although there are no recipes for the analysis of interaction (Lier,1988), some considerations on how students interacted during the journal writing activity will be made here.

Interaction in the classroom through the use of dialogue journal writing occurred in the following way: first the idea of using journals as a means to improve secondary students' writing skills in English was proposed to the subjects of this study. So, they were asked indirectly about their wish to improve their writing skills in English. Then, in the form of negotiation, both teacher and students set up all the details regarding the proposed activity, such as frequency and amount of writing,

correction, grading, choice of topics, etc. (See app.6).

According to Allwright's (1984) social and pedagogical point of view, it might be said that those students started the process of interaction since all of them agreed to participate in the writing activity although some of them had difficulty to get started, as it can be observed in some of their entries quoted below:

"Today I'm not inspired . Write about what? It's not my day.
I know this activity is to improve our English. But some day I'm not inspired. I'd like to write a lot of thing, but where's the inspired?

Well teacher, I hope to the next week I'll inspired. I don't want to disappoint you.

Kisses,

O."

"I don't have any idea to write. The only thing I know is that I think that this activity will be a great way to improve my write.

Since it is the first time that I'm going to write in this journal I am lost.

But I promise that in the next time I'll write more, because I like it very much.

Kisses, your student,

J."

"Dear Teacher,

Today I don't know what I write because I don't know, I Think is lazies. And this week is the last before the Olimpical games, and I just "penso" to play in games and the competion. I expected it too good and my group win medals.

Bye,

V."

Other types of interaction patterns can be verified in students' journals through the teacher and students questions and

answers. Kreeft (1984), in a study with dialogue journal writing, observed that the primary function of asking questions is to promote interaction in the classroom. In the present study, in general, the teacher ended her responses to students' journals with questions which led them to rethink what they had written. In most cases, students answered the questions and also asked the teacher other questions. Students' attempts to ask the teacher-researcher questions such as "How are you?"; "What about you, do you remember yours 15's?"; "Why do you chose this is a language? Do you like other languages?"; "Am I right or wrong?" and to answer the teacher-researcher's questions such as "What about you, do you like English?; ...you said your teacher is boring. Why? What does she do that you don't like?", etc..., indicate that they were interacting with the teacher-researcher, and the teacher-researcher with the students as well. Clear examples of how this process occurred can be found in various samples of students' journals in appendix 7.

Besides interaction between students and the teacher-researcher observed in their journals, interaction was also observed by the teacher-researcher while students were writing in their journals. As it can be seen in the teacher-researcher's diary (Appendix 8, registers 2, 4, 5, 8, and 10) one might say that during students' writing the interaction followed the S-T-S pattern, i.e., students asked questions first. Even when students asked questions in their native language and the teacher answered in English, there was an indication that they felt at ease to ask questions. The fact that students were interacting with the teacher was also an indication that they were involved in the

learning task.

As to student/student interaction, this occurred in every class in which students wrote in their journals. It was observed that soon after receiving the journals back, and reading what the teacher-researcher had written, some students used to comment with their classmates on what the teacher had written concerning ideas, or new words they did not know yet. During some classes in which the teacher-researcher was too busy answering students' questions or clarifying their doubts, other students who also had questions asked their peers for help. As it is registered, for example, "...Z kept asking J, who had lived in the United States questions about vocabulary. ..."; "... B and J asked another classmate for the meaning of some words. Some of them asked each other questions while they were writing. ...". Other examples of this type of interaction can be seen in the teacher-researcher's registers (apendix 8).

In short, the social and pedagogical aspect of students asking each other questions on meaning and on structure was not just a form of students talking to each other, but it made them mainly take part in interaction as a process. Along with that, the teacher's oral answers in the classroom as well as her written answers to students' journals, and the avoidance of formal correction of their written mistakes were a means of establishing a good rapport with students, which seems to have facilitated the process of classroom interaction as a whole. This is in line with Kreeft's (1984) findings. The results in relation to interaction, of this study, are also consistent with the results

of another previous study on dialogue journal writing. Similarly to Miccoli's (1987) findings on the use of dialogue journal writing with EFL College students, in the present study it was noticed that the use of journals with EFL secondary students served as a communicative channel between teacher and students, and apparently, it also showed the students their important role in their own learning process.

4.2.3 Motivation

The third subcategory against which the data of the present study was evaluated is motivation. Students' motivation, as pointed out earlier, is an essential component in any learning process (Ausubel, 1968; Staton, 1981 Angelini, 1973; and McKeachie, 1978), and bears a strong relationship to the other two subcategories - classroom management and interaction in the classroom. If students are motivated towards a particular subject and, if the teacher takes the role of a "facilitator" rather than of an "authority figure", the process of interaction between teacher and students and vice-versa will probably occur, and, as a result, learning may take place. If students are not motivated for a particular subject, the teacher may even arouse their motivation if he or she establishes a non-threatening classroom environment by acting as a facilitator in the classroom. It has been said that teachers can use students' motivation in order to make them achieve success, and consequently to produce learning (McKeachie, 1978).

Although it is understood that there are affective and social

factors which may cause motivation, such as reward and punishment, the cognitive necessity of knowledge, individual or group challenge, all of them contribute to learning (Ausubel, 1968). Thus, motivation in this study will be defined as students' interest to participate in the writing activity inside the classroom through the use of dialogue journal writing in English.

One might say that in the foreign language class, students are best motivated for learning the language when they are given the chance to put this language into practice and when they perceive that the language is truly communicative, fitting its context (Broughton et al, 1980).

The students who took part in this study had taken some English during the previous four years in elementary school. However, the emphasis, according to the school program, was given to speaking, although there were some writing exercises which followed the sequence of the textbook adopted during those four years. Since the emphasis had been stronger on the spoken than on the written form of the language, it was thought that students were ready to start learning to read and write in English and that, during the three years of high school, the main focus should be on reading and writing skills. To find out the students' degree of motivation before and after the investigation of dialogue journal writing, a questionnaire was administered.

Comparing the answers on the attitudes inventory administered at the end of the investigation to those on the one administered before the investigation (see app. 1), the results indicated that

students' motivation and interest had changed, in general for the better, at the end of the research. In the beginning of the study, when students were only working with the textbook and eventually with a text or a song, they showed very little interest in learning to write. They said that the classes were "monotonous and boring; very bad because of the book; the activities were not interesting; the method did not help...", when the book was used, whereas those classes in which they wrote the dialogue journals were interesting. As they said, "... the classes are more interesting now than before; I felt more interested to learn; I am more motivated to learn now...". More examples can be seen in students' answers to the questions of the inventory (appendix 1). It becomes still more evident in their answers to the subjective questions (appendix 2), in which they could express their opinions and feelings more openly concerning the English classes they had received during the period before and those they received after the use of the journals (appendix 3).

After three months of dialogue journal writing activity, these same students also showed a different reaction towards the English classes and the methodology. The classes were given twice a week and, because of the school program, in one of these classes students had to follow their regular textbook and in the other they were asked to write their journals. As can be seen through students' comments about the activities in the textbook and about the classes in which they wrote their journals (appendix 3), students seemed very interested and motivated to participate in the activities. They stated that the activities

with the use of the journals were more interesting than those with the use of the textbook. They also said that they became more interested in writing in the journals than in just doing the written exercises suggested by the textbook and that they felt more motivated and more comfortable writing in the journals than doing the other written exercises.

In order to have various sources of information about students' motivation to check against each other, students were also interviewed informally and formally. The informal interview was oral. In this students could say whatever they felt like saying as to how the journals affected their motivation to learn English, about their writing in English and their learning of English in terms of structure and use of new vocabulary. This informal interview and students' responses were recorded and transcribed (see appendix 4). As it can be seen from the quotations below taken from the interviews, many of the students noticed that something different was happening concerning their learning to write and their motivation to learn to write.

For example, some of them said:

"... Now it's easier to write than it was in the beginning; with the time, it has becoming easier and I think it is because the practice in writing..."

"... In the beginning I had more difficulty in expressing what I wanted to say, but soon I was feeling more confident to write".

Some of them could express clearly that they were learning:

"...It was difficult to write in English in the beginning; now it is better".

"... I have some doubts when I start to write, but the writing

exercise is helping me overcome some of those difficulties..."

Others showed their enjoyment with this activity:

"... I am enjoying more and I am feeling more comfortable to write ..."

"... this activity is wonderful to me. In the beginning I could write three lines only and now I am writing even more..."

These statements indicate that students liked the journal writing activity and that they felt more comfortable to express their ideas now than before, although they knew they were still making mistakes in writing. These findings are consistent with those obtained through the questionnaire, which were discussed before.

The formal interview consisted of a formal question asked by the teacher-researcher through one of her responses to students' journals. This was given to students one month and a half after they had started with the journal writing activity. This time the topic was suggested by the teacher-researcher, as it had been previously planned. The question students were asked to answer was:

Dear X,

It has been some time since we have started working with "Dialogue Journal Writing", and I would like you to give me your opinion about it by writing down what points you liked and which you disliked about this activity. Your suggestions with regard to this activity are also welcomed."

Students' answers to this interview can be seen in the samples of journals in appendix 5. Many of the answers again suggested that students liked to work with the dialogue journal writing

activity. Some said that this activity helped them increase their vocabulary as well as it made them feel more secure in writing. Most of them said that it even made them aware of certain mistakes they made, as can be seen in the quotations from students' interview below :

"... I have found out that English is written with capital letter in the beginning"

" ... it is tell somebody instead of tell for somebody..."

"...I have noticed some corrections when you write back; for example, I noticed that we say "to save" and not "for save". I understand better the future with "will"..."

"... I notice your corrections when I am going to write again..."

"... It helps me because the teacher writes in another way correcting our mistakes and putting other words that I can use next time I am going to write..."

It was also observed that students felt encouraged to write more, and felt motivated and interested in learning English. The following quotations from students' interview illustrate this:

"... this journal is helping me a lot. I can write more after started to do this activity ..."

" ...It's so interesting because we can open ourselves up with you and at the same time we can learn to write. ... I love this. I am learning so much with it..."

"... I can write in my journal something that I want. ...I can write free. ...The work sounds much better than making exercises everyday. I think I'm growing up in English..."

Thus it could be said that the answers obtained through the formal interview with respect to students' motivation and to their reactions towards the dialogue journal writing activity corroborated those obtained through the informal interview.

Another instrument used to collect data for this study that

may illustrate even better about students' motivation and interest to learn to write in English and their reactions to the dialogue journal writing activity are the teacher-researcher's observation registers in which she recorded students' questions, doubts, and/or important events that could show students' behavior while writing in their diaries.

In Register no.2 (app.8), for example, it can be seen that students were very curious to read what the teacher had written to them in her responses. Some of them started to write immediately; others took some time because they wanted to know exactly what the teacher had written in terms of new vocabulary. As it was observed on that particular day, "...Some of them started to write immediately, and others asked me about the meaning of the new vocabulary...." Some asked each other questions about form, structure or meaning. They tried to help each other and when they were in doubt, they asked the teacher for clarification." This was observed during the classes where the journals were used. Also, through the registers one can see that students asked for this activity and showed satisfaction in knowing that they were going to write that day, as it can be seen in Register no.7 (app.8), for example, "...Then another student asked me whether they were going to write in their diaries. I said yes, and she showed satisfaction in learning that she was going to write ...". It was also observed through the registers that students asked the teacher a large number of questions concerning the use of words, form, structure, and appropriate use of the new vocabulary in the context they wanted to write about. (Some

examples can be seen in appendix 8, registers no.3, no.4, no.5, no.6, no.8, and no.10).

Similar to subjects in other research done in writing with the use of dialogue journal writing (Whistler, 1984), students in the present study showed motivation towards this writing activity. It seems that the activity itself helped them overcome some of their difficulties, as for example to get started to write. They also seem to have understood better the purpose of writing in terms of exploring and developing their ideas. This type of activity apparently encouraged them to take risks, causing, in this way, a positive impact on students' attitudes towards writing in the foreign language and on their habits of writing. This last finding is in line with those of Spack and Sadow (1983); Markman (1984); and Simpson (1986).

In sum, the results obtained concerning classroom environment, classroom management, and students' involvement in the learning task, suggest that students had the necessary input in order to become motivated to learn to write in English. It seems that the dialogue journal writing activity strongly motivated the learners and, as a consequence, discipline in class was easy to maintain and interaction naturally occurred during the period when journals were used. All this together provided students with the opportunity to experience a different activity from that they were used to, i.e., from the traditional written exercises suggested in students' textbook. It also provided them with a way of learning to write in the foreign language which, in turn, seems to have led to a positive attitude towards learning

to write in English.

4.3 Students' Writing Progress

The second major category chosen for the analysis of the data was "Students' writing progress", subdivided into three subcategories: content, organization, cohesion and coherence. Within these subcategories some aspects such as clarity, development of ideas, use of strategies of communication, and amount of writing were analyzed to verify students' improvement in their writing skill. As it was previously mentioned, this study is concerned with students' development of writing as a writing process, therefore, in the analysis of aspects regarding students' writing progress, students' strategies of communication were of particular interest. Among such strategies, transfer from native language as well as overgeneralization (Tarone, Cohen and Dumas, 1983) were the ones students used most as an attempt to make themselves understood by their audience.

As it was described before, students had a notebook in which they wrote weekly in class during twenty minutes about topics of their choice. One week, the teacher-researcher collected those notebooks to give students written feedback. The next week students received their journals back together with the teacher's comments. Then they read what the teacher had written and wrote again. Such procedure occurred during a period of three months.

4.3.1 Content

As to content, one aspect verified was the clarity of

students' writings. Clarity in this study was defined as the ability students had to communicate their thoughts, feelings and ideas in English in a way that they could be understood by their audience (the teacher-researcher).

One fact to be taken into consideration in the analysis of clarity in student's journals is that their level of linguistic competence in English was that of secondary students who were still in the middle of the process of learning the foreign language. Besides that, they were not using English as their second language which means that their only contact with English was probably twice a week in their English classes.

Yet, although most entries were not well written in terms of form, and consequently sometimes difficult to understand, it was verified that students were able to express quite clearly, their feelings, wishes, complaints, requests, suggestions, and so on. In an effort to make themselves understood they concentrated much more on the content of their writings than on forms and structures of the language. In other words, those students tried to use one of the communication strategies mentioned by Tarone et al (1983:5) and defined as "a systematic attempt by the learner to express or decode meaning in the target language, in situations where the appropriate systematic target language rules have not been formed". It was observed that in all of their entries they wrote clear enough to make themselves understood in terms of content. Students' entries show their effort in trying to communicate. For example, if a student wanted to suggest something, he was able to do it in the following way:

"Teacher I think you should ask suggestions for the students for the next music, for working in class, because I've been upset in english classes and I think that one new music would cheer up the next english classes."

The teacher-researcher replied in the following way:

"Dear Q.,

I see that you are not feeling well in our English classes, and there must be a reason for that.

Let's see if everybody accepts your suggestion of singing a new song next class, OK? And if everybody accepts it, will you bring the song to us next class? Meanwhile, why don't you write about the things you like in our classes or outside the class? It is only a suggestion OK?"

The same student answered :

"I think so, It's only a suggestion, because I have many tests and homeworks and I didn't have time to think in another suggestions. I promise give another suggestions for the English classes in another hour, now it's impossible."

In this case, one could say that the information was clear, relevant and interesting. The student was able to communicate, and even to correct his spelling of the word "English", which he had written twice in his entry with a small case letter "e". Although no correction by crossing out the misspelled word or any other mark had been made, this student was able to perceive the correct form in the teacher's writing and to correct his mistake.

Another student for example was able to complain, and answer questions in the following way:

"This week will be very tired because I have tests all the days. Today I'm very tired because I Should've

phisycs test but our teacher didn't come, and I hadn't study for the test.

What motivates me is that the year is finishing and I think I'll pass the year without taking finally exams."

In response to this student's entry, the teacher-researcher wrote:

"Dear An,

I see that you like when teachers can not come to class. Do you know why? Is it because of the teachers or because of the tests? I think it is because of the tests. Nobody likes taking tests especially every month. And how about Physics?

However, that is our Brazilian system of evaluating students and many teachers cannot find another way of assessing their students..."

The same student, trying to make herself as clear as possible, answered:

"Sometimes we are tired of our classes, and besides I don't like Physics very much.

In some subjects is difficult to asses without tests, for example Physics and Math, and moreover I think that it is easy if we do tests..."

Another student asked questions trying to find answers for her personal problems in the following way:

"Hi? How are you? I'm fine, much better than the week before last one.

I'm so surprised because I discovered you have two dogs!

I like cats but my father doesn't want to "criar" them. Some cats, like "angora" and "siames", are very beautiful.

I love these animals: tigers, lions, rabbits, eagles, dogs, monkeys, ducks, etc... But it is difficult to take care of lions or tigers. If i'd have a farm, I would have ducks, horses, cows, etc...

Kisses,

E"

The teacher-researcher's answer to this student was:

" Dear E.,

I am feeling much better this week than the last one because I could organize myself and prepare all my classes.

It is a pity that your father doesn't want you to raise cats. They are so lovely and beautiful, but he must have his own reasons which I think you should respect. I have two cats and I love them, too. Don't worry, when you grow up and have your own farm, you can raise all types of animals you like, OK?

Kisses,

Beti".

After discovering that both teacher and student liked the same subject, this same student felt free to ask other questions:

"I'm so fine, in spite of the tests and tiring. Teacher, may I call you Beti? I'm asking because I don't know.

I would like very much if I have a very big farm. There, I'd raise all types of animals, the same you said.

Beti, why doesn't our country have the same rights as the others? I'd like to understand this. Do you understand? I want to change this country, but how? I'm so confused.

Kisses,

E".

Other examples of how students communicated their ideas meaningfully can be seen in appendix 9. As it can be observed there and through the examples above, students in this study were able to make themselves understood and if they were in doubt, they were able to ask questions either for clarification of ideas

or concerning form through writing. Although students tried to improve their writing through correcting their mistakes whenever they noticed the right form in the teacher's entries, their questions were more concerned with ideas than with form. For example:

"... Teacher, what are you planning to do during vacation?..."

"... Who are you vote for?..."

"... You had interested to learn to other languages?..."

"...By the way, what do you think the inflation in Brazil? Do you think that Brazil going front?..."

"... The world was very beautiful. Why is not more?..."

Similar to Staton's (1982), this teacher-researcher's responses were guided by language in use as a model for students to write and to help improve their writings in an indirect way, as it can be verified in the previous examples. In the teacher's entries, students could find additional information and/or clarification of some ambiguous word or structure they might have used in their journals. This procedure can be observed throughout the whole process of working with the journals. However, what might be considered the most important aspect in this study is that students tried to write correctly although many times with little success in terms of form, but they discovered that writing can be amusing and have personal value even if one still has difficulty in spelling and in formulating correct sentences. For example, in the following entries the students expressed how they saw this activity:

"... I think it's very interesting writing in the journal because

I study and to learn is must. ...It's very wonderful to write for you..."

"... I think the realization this journal very good because motivates the student to right..."

"... I think this activity is wonderful, because it is going to prattic our english. I liked it a lot, because it is an activity different. Then, this activity different is going to be a evolution to our english..."

"... We think that we don't know to write, because anybody explaine it for us. Now, you do, and it's very important for us to understand the writing of English language..."

It seems that students' discovery that: (a) they were able to communicate; (b) they were not being directly corrected by the "red pen"; (c) they were not "punished" by grades, led them to make an effort to write more and more, and this increase in frequency and amount of writing probably improved students' writing in terms of clarity of communication.

Still with regard to clarity, it seems that because of their low level of grammatical competence, students wrote short sentences, yet were able to make themselves understood. This could also be seen as a strategy of communication that they used. Below follow some examples from students' writings to illustrate this point:

"Dear Teacher,

I know Paraguai, Uruguai and Argentina.
I never visit Rio, Bahia and recife. But I'd like to go there someday. I heard it's beautiful. And I saw post cards, films, etc. I know it's beautiful and have a lot of things to see.

Kisses,

O".

"Teacher,

I don't have any idea to write too!
Like the journal is confidential, I show you my
life.
Nowadays, I am very well!
I'm liking a boy!!!!
I need some advise.
Please, help me.

W"

"Teacher

I'd like to talk about soccer. Teacher, Do you like
soccer? Soccer is a big sport. The soccer is a very
good. The Brazilian culture is added in the soccer. I
like soccer very much, because the people participate of
the game. Is a big emotion."

"Dear teacher,

Today I will write about my childhood. In my
childhood I liked to play toy with my friends. I had
many friends. Nowadays my friends lives next my house. In
my childhood, I liked to see the sun set in the beach.
This with my parents. All this I remember. This is my
simple childhood."

4.3.2 Organization

As it has already been mentioned, students' journals were
analyzed focusing on content rather than on form. Nevertheless,
it was observed that the majority of students' journals had a
topic sentence with the main idea and that in most cases, there
was enough information included in the paragraphs which followed
a logical order. The following examples can illustrate this
point:

"E"

" Beti,

Hello?! How are you? I'm so tired too because I had several tests last week. I was studying all the time. And I'll have another tests this week and the next. I don't see the time for everything to finish.

There will be a party at my house this saturday. It will be at my beach house, on Ingleses. I hope it's not raining. I'll pray for it. Ah! I love Ingleses! do you know Ingleses? If you don't you must go there, you'll love

It's a pity "Ti" is going to travel to Canada. She's my best friend. I'm going to feel miss her. But what can I do? She'll come back in 1991 I think. Teacher, a very good vacatiion for you. I'll see you next year. Merry Christmas!

Kisses,

E"

"H"

" Dear teacher,

I didn't so anything that I dislike in this activity.

Perhaps on the beginning I was frightened to write wrong. Now I know that I write wrong, too. And sometimes I feel it but now I'm free to write my ideas. I dislike the moments when I have no ideas to write but they are disappearing with the time.

This activity it makes me write better with more fluence.

And I have a novelty for you. My particular English School director tell me that I'm one of the bests students in the school because I have a big fluence to write and speack.

To speack I learned with them, but to write I learned with you and he invited me to begun to teach at the school next year, after the exercise.

Isn't it marvelous?

I'm very happy.

Kisses,

H"

As it can be observed the paragraphs contained in the students' entries above are well developed, and also there was no change of topics which means that in terms of organization those paragraphs are well written. Along with that, as it can be seen in "H"'s entry, for example, the paragraphs follow a logical order, i.e., she starts by mentioning that she likes this kind of writing activity, then she expresses her initial fear of making mistakes. Next, she says that because of this kind of activity, she feels free to write and she is writing better. In the next paragraphs she continues by saying that she is considered one of the best students in the school where she studies English and that she was invited to start teaching at this school the next year. Thus, there was no change of topics within the paragraphs and they follow a certain logical order.

Also it was observed that although some students were able to write a topic sentence with the main idea, sometimes the sentences were not very well-organized in terms of completeness, correct order, or there was some information missing, so that, the teacher-researcher had to make inferences to understand students' texts. However, in terms of communication of ideas, students were able to express their thoughts and feelings.

The following example illustrates this point:

"Dear Beti,

I think It's very interesting writing in the journal because I study and to learn is must.

The points that I dislike they:

- I don't be to write but (I to learn must)
- I don't be to creative, I do, no to the idea. and etc, etc, etc.

It's very wonderful write for you.
I like it."

In this case, although there is a paragraph with the main idea, the majority of sentences are neither complete nor organized in a sequence. However, in terms of communication, this student was able to make herself understood. In this specific case, the student was trying to say that she found the idea of writing in the journal very interesting. She perceived that through this activity she could learn. However, she disliked the fact that she did not know how to write and she was not creative because she did not have any ideas to write. On the other hand, she said that she liked to write to the teacher-researcher.

In the example above and in some others, it was observed that students made an effort to communicate with their teacher. It can also be said that as they are still in the process of learning to write, the aspects concerning organization will be learned through the practice of writing.

4.3.3 Cohesion and Coherence

Another category used to analyze students' writing was cohesion and coherence. The relationship between these two concepts has been the focus of considerable argument among researchers in discourse analysis. Most of them would probably agree with Gefvert's (1985:139) definition of coherence. She states through the following analogy: "a coherent piece of writing is like a symphony orchestra in perfect tune and perfect synchronization", but it is about how this quality called

"coherence" of a text is achieved that they disagree. To Halliday & Hassan (1976), coherence of a text is established through linguistic devices, i.e., cohesive devices. In brief, to these authors cohesion is the cause of coherence.

Carrell (1982) argues against this view. Her analysis of the relationship between cohesion and coherence is based on schema theory, which views comprehension as an interaction between the text and reader's or listener's schemata or background knowledge. She points out empirical evidence against the concept of cohesion as a measure of coherence. For Carrell, coherence is in the mind of the reader/listener when the text makes sense, i.e., when the interaction between reader and writer happens, and this "sense making" depends on the reader's/listener's schemata. If he/she does not possess the appropriate schemata needed to comprehend a particular text, it will not make sense i.e., comprehension will not occur, regardless of how well the sentences and ideas in the text are connected by cohesive devices. Thus, to Carrell it is coherence that produces cohesion, not the opposite.

Yule (1987:106) agrees with Carrell on this matter. While discussing cohesion and coherence he states: "The key to the concept of coherence.... the way the world is". He claims that it is not enough to connect words to interpret a text and that there must be something else which makes the reader give meaning to the text.

In this study, students' texts will be considered coherent following Carrell's (1982) and Yule's (1987) concept of cohesion and coherence in which the interpretation of a text depends on

the reader's prior background knowledge. Yet, in this analysis of students' journals their texts were considered coherent every time students made themselves understood to their teacher. This way, cohesion and coherence were analyzed in terms of students' attempts to communicate.

This analysis deals with the process of students' writing in English, that is, the focus of analysis is on strategies students used in their journals in order to communicate their thoughts feelings and ideas. Although students' journal entries were a kind of product, in this analysis they were not seen as a final product, but as part of the total process of writing. Therefore, all entries (from the first to the last week of the investigation) for each of the fifteen students were taken into account in the analysis for this study.

In order to demonstrate how students progressed in their writings, some aspects mentioned above will be illustrated through samples from students' writings. For example, some students' entries increased in length from the beginning to the end of the investigation as it can be verified in "U"'s, "E"'s, and "Ar"'s journal entries:

"U"'s first week of writing in the dialogue journal writing:

"September 5th, 1989

Dear Bete,

I don't like blue pen, OK? but it is not important...

Recently I'd like very much English class(es), the new method is wonderful and I get better it.

U"

"U"'s last week of dialogue journal writing:

" November 28th, 1989

Dear Beti,

Next vacation Im going to the beach but I don't like very much it. I don't have a plans for the my vacation. I intend to travel for anywhere, I think it is good for me. On "carnaval" I will go to visit my relatives (grandmother, grandfather) with my DADY.

About my Christmas I intend to pass with my family and the reveillon I will go to a club. Beti, I hope that you have a marvellous vacation, Christmas, and I hope that you have a wonderful new year.

By the way, I will think about my English classes on vacation, too.

Kisses,
U"

"E"'s first week:

"Sep. 5th, 1989

Teacher:

Hi? how are you? I'm fine.

Today I had a test and I went to physical education (volleyball), thus, I'm so tired.

We'll have Olimpic Games next week. My group will play volley, basketball and handball. I hope we win someones. Cheer us.

Kisses,

E"

"E"'s last week:

" November 28th, 1989

Beti,

Hello?! How are you? I'm so fine. And you? I'm so tired too because I had several tests last week. I was studying all the time. And I'll have another tests this week and next week. I don't see the time for everything to finish.

There will be a party at my house this saturday. It will be at my beachouse, on Ingleses. I hope it's not raining. I'll pray for it. Ah! I love Ingleses! Do you know Ingleses? If you don't you must go there, You'll love.

It's a pity "TI" is going to travel to Canada. She's my best friend. I'm going to feel miss her. But what can I do? She'll come back in 1991 I think. Teacher. a very good vacatiion for you. I'll see you next year. Merry christmas!

Kisses,

Beti,

Hello?! How are you? I'm so fine. And you? I'm so tired too because I had several tests last week. I was studying all the time. And I'll have another tests this week and next week. I don't see the time for everything to finish.

There will be a party at my house this saturday. It will be at my beachouse, on Ingleses. I hope it's not raining. I'll pray for it. Ah! I love Ingleses! Do you know Ingleses? If you don't you must go there, You'll love.

It's a pity "TI" is going to travel to Canada. She's my best friend. I'm going to feel miss her. But what can I do? She'll come back in 1991 I think. Teacher. a very good vacatiion for you. I'll see you next year. Merry christmas!

Kisses,

E"

E"

"Ar"'s first week:

"Sep. 5th, 1989

Bete,

I want to tell about friends. Maybe because I'm feeling like a person who is losing one.

I lived in France for four years and when I returned I didn't have any friend. This girl was the first person who begun to speak with me and heard what I had to say.

Now she's leaving me for another girl that she didn't like before.

I am very hurt because I didn't want to separate myself of her. Can you help me? Please, tell me what can I do?

I think she like me still, but I don't know what to do.

Kisses,

Ar"

"Ar"'s last week:

"Nov. 28th, 1989

Beti

I pretend to go to the beach and make a travel to France. I wrote to "Corrida Maluca" to win a travel to there (My grandmother's house). I have a lot of plans for the vacation and for my whole life, too.

Did you know that I won the "Rainha das Debutantes" concurs. I'm the 2nd. princess. Very nice, hein?

Now I pretend look to the future and let my past (unhappy) go away with the time.

I think all of the problems I have I can see like a teaching that makes me grew up.

I'm happy to had meet a person like you and have known you like a person and not only like a teacher.

Near Christmas I saw all the things smiling and they are clearlier and better.

Now I can only wish you a very merry Christsmas and a marvelous new year.

Thank you for all

Kisses and
more, and more

Kisses,

yours,

Ar"

The examples above show that these students increased their writings in length from the first to the last week of using dialogue journal writing. It might also be said that their texts were coherent since students' thoughts, feelings and ideas were understood by their audience.

Although they used very few cohesive devices, their journals were comprehensible to the teacher-researcher. Going beyond the surface level and trying to make inferences, she could understand the writings quite well, as seen in the examples below:

"Dear Beti,

I love when you said "F&". It's very good.

Do you see my "LULA"!!?!

LULA GO TO for the "second turn". It is very wonderful.

Do you know think?

... ..

So, Do you to vote on wo?

tell-me, please

thank's

F"

The teacher-researcher answered this student's entry in the following way:

"Dear F,

I have seen the name of your candidate, and I think

he is an option among the many candidates we have for this elections.

You also asked me if I know how to think. Yes, I know how to think, but I haven't decided whom I am going to vote for, yet. So, I can't tell you who my candidate is now. How about the other candidates? Do you know something about them, too?

Kisses,

Beti"

"Q"'s entry:

I not dislike anything in this activity, I have only points for this activity (The journal), one this points it's I was to get security in writing without the English book, because I felt very tied with the English book and today I've been loosing this problem it was because this activity."

After inferring what this students wanted to say in this paragraph, the teacher-researcher answered:

Dear "Q", 0

It is very nice that you do not dislike anything in this activity. And you mean that one of the good points is that you are more secure to write in the journal now than before when we were using the book. So, you want to say that you have solved your problem of going to the book every time you are going to write. Congratulations! And let's continue writing, OK?

Kisses,

Beti"

Probably there was enough background knowledge that was common to teacher and students so that the interaction between reader and writer could be established. Thus according to Carrell's and Yule's view of coherence, one could say that these students' writings were coherent.

The following examples demonstrate how students who could not make use of more appropriate linguistic devices tried to communicate with their teacher.

"... I think how this situation... it's of no use! ... Desunion the teachers and students... for nothing!!!!!!!!!!

This period is very terrible.
Nobody know "what" to make.

There's no getting away from that!! In my opinion, no have is way out.
Do you see something. (one the way?)"

In sum, this student was talking about the teacher's strike. She saw no solution for that and she was asking her teacher if there was any solution. She wanted her teacher's opinion about the strike.

Another student expressing her opinion about the activity of dialogue journal writing wrote:

" I think this new-experience is very interesting "to learn and to play at the same time, wonderful!!!

I were you, I'd go to repeat that experience.
Think it over about it, OK?

Obs: I'm sorry, for to write wrong. I am terrible in a English. Pardom please."

In other words, this student found the experience of writing in the journal very interesting, and she was enjoying it, too. She was also suggesting to write in the journal again.

In the following examples, students tried to communicate with the teacher-researcher through transfer of words and structures from their native language (Portuguese) to the target language (English) what they wanted to say:

"... Why do you "never more" music played? What happened?
The many people like music with I..."

"... I think she punish me, but not descount me two points of my "media", I not like of this actitude...."

"... I think I'll pass without final test this year, well, I don't have sure, but I hope!!!

"... On Sunday, I didn't expect to resive my friends old. ... At night I watched eleitoral program, I can't vote because I don't have 16...."

"... I don't support any candidat so I think you should have vote for the best, that he help the population..."

Another strategy of communication students used in their journals was overgeneralization, i.e., the use of a rule of the foreign language (English) in the inappropriate English forms and context (Tarone et al, 1983). Some students' examples can illustrate this aspect:

"... I'll write about the "Hang Loose Pro Contested". It's a championship maked at Joaquina..."

"... This period of tension and expectations I'm feeled aback and I think very messy..."

"... I haven't leanset radio for a long time that is why I don't have suggestion..."

"... What a shame! My group didn' may have medals in the Olimpic Games..."

"... but I didn't like this program on Sunday, because they spook same that Sarney spook when he was elected for president..."

"... I'm very happy because Andrea's mother pasted in her "tese" and my uncle is going well, he was operated..."

More examples of students' transfer from their native language to the foreign language as well as overgeneralization can be seen in all the appendices concerning students' journals.

Students' writing samples described in this section also indicate that they were much more worried about making themselves understood than about finding the correct linguistic form, or structure. They wrote without worrying about accuracy because they knew they were learning. It is possible that as those students knew they were not going to be graded for "how" they were writing, they dared taking risks, i. e., they were willing to make mistakes, which is an important step not only in learning to write but in learning any skill. This probably also helped students keep their "filter low", i.e., it made them feel free to write, creating a minimum of anxiety and promoting, in this way, an optimal input for learning to write (Krashen, 1982).

4.4 Summary of Findings

Summarizing this chapter, one could say - first, regarding the category of analysis **Classroom Environment** - that the findings strongly indicate that the use of the dialogue journal writing activity: (a) aroused students' motivation and interest towards learning to write in English; (b) helped keep discipline in the classroom; (c) promoted positive interaction among students and between students and teacher; (d) helped establish a positive relationship between students and teacher inside the classroom; and (e) provided effective input to students for learning to write; and - second, regarding the category

Students' Writing Progress - that it appears that students learned and progressed in their writings concerning content. In the end they included more topics and ideas in their journals, and the amount of writing of most students had increased considerably, and above all, students showed great pleasure in writing. Journal writing was a fun activity. These findings are in line with Whistler's (1984), Kreeft's (1983) and Sellevaag's (1986) findings, whose studies also examined the effects of the use of dialogue journal writing on students' motivation and ability to write in English.

Because of the short period of time dialogue journal writing was practiced in this study, it cannot be verified very accurately whether students' ability to write cohesively and coherently and in an organized way improved as a result of this activity. Yet, it was observed that they tried: (a) to increase their vocabulary; (b) to look for appropriate vocabulary for a particular context; (c) to write more correctly as a result of perceiving their own mistakes; and (d) to use new words and expressions in their journals. It was also observed that at times they used transfer, they resorted to words and structures from Portuguese to make themselves clear in their writings. All this represents an effort to improve their writing. Thus, one might suppose that there was some progress in students' learning to write.

C H A P T E R V

5. Conclusions, Limitations and Recommendation for further Research

In this chapter, the findings and conclusions of the present study will be drawn together. Some limitations of the study and suggestions for further research will also be presented.

After examining the results obtained in this study in light of the research questions raised at the beginning of the study, some conclusions may be drawn. With regard to the first research question - whether, along the process of investigation, there has been observed an increase of interest in students to learn to write in English - it may be said that the answer to this question is a positive one. There are various examples to support this statement.

First, if we compare students' answers on the attitudes'inventory applied in the beginning and at the end of the investigation (see app.1), we will see that their attitudes towards writing changed. In the beginning, they said they did not

like to write and the reason apparently was that they were insecure towards writing. They were afraid of making mistakes. In addition, as they wrote in their journals, the textbook adopted was "boring" and "tiresome", which demotivated them to learn to write. However, with the activity of dialogue journal writing and along with the gradual development of the process of writing such negative attitudes and feelings seemed to diminish.

Second, it was observed and registered (see app.8) that none of the students refused to write in their journals whenever they were asked to. They started to write immediately after solving their doubts and tried not to waste time for they knew they had only twenty minutes to do that activity.

Third, students' willingness to ask each other and the teacher many questions concerning form, structure or meaning, and their promptness to help each other to solve their doubts may also be an indication that there was an increase in students' interest to participate in the activity.

With respect to the second research question - whether along the process of investigation, there has been observed an increase in students' motivation to participate in the activity of journal writing - it may be said that the answer to this question is also positive. Students' motivation to participate in this activity was observed throughout the whole process of investigation, i.e., from the beginning when students showed curiosity in this kind of activity and agreed to participate, to the end, when some of them (as can be seen in their journal entries), suggested the continuity of the activity in the following school year.

As has been stated by other researchers already mentioned in the previous chapters, motivation occurs when the learners are included as active participants in the process of learning, a condition that urges them to take responsibility for their own learning. In this study, the journal writing activity apparently provided this condition for students. It was verified that although during their English classes in which the textbook was used, the teacher-researcher gave students a variety of extra-activities (developed by herself), to motivate students to write in English, none of them motivated students to write as intensively as the activity of dialogue journal writing.

The third research question - along the process of investigation, has there been observed an improvement in students' writing with regard to content, organization, cohesion and coherence? - It has been observed in students' successive writings, and throughout the whole process of investigation that little by little students became accustomed to observe the teacher-researcher's responses to what they had written, and that whenever they noticed they could use a new vocabulary item, an expression, or a linking word to improve their writing in English or to clarify what they had written before, they tried to make use of those new linguistic items.

It is possible that more clearly detectable improvements in these directions would be found in students' writing if this study were conducted over a longer period of time, as it had been planned. Yet it seems that the fact that students' writings were accepted by the teacher-researcher without any formal correction

led them to write more and more in terms of length as well as number of ideas approached. This can be observed in students' entries throughout the investigation. All this suggests that learning was probably taking place and, consequently students were making progress in writing.

Also answered positively. Along the process of investigation, and as it can be seen in the teacher-researcher's registers (app.8) as well as in students' journals (app. 7 and 9), it was observed that students wanted to ask more and more questions about many different subjects - from questions referring to the English language to personal questions about the teacher-researcher's subjects of interest. The majority of them felt free to ask any kind of questions they wished to know about. As time passed, students became more confident with the teacher, as some of them clearly stated in their journals. There was a good rapport between teacher-researcher and students. All this indicates that each time the teacher-researcher was interacting more and more with the students and vice versa. Students also interacted constantly among themselves asking questions whenever they had doubts concerning ideas, concepts, or linguistic forms.

In sum, it can be said that the objectives proposed in the beginning of this research have been met. Students participated intensely in the writing activity, they showed motivation to write, and they increased their amount of writing from the beginning to the end. Thus, it can be concluded that in this study, the activity of dialogue journal writing: (1) aroused students' interest and motivation for writing in English; (2)

promoted students' motivation for learning to write in English; (3) promoted interaction between teacher/students, students/teacher and student/student, and as a result of all this increased students' participation in their process of learning to write in English. In addition to these major conclusions, some minor conclusions about the effectiveness of dialogue journal writing on the development of writing may be drawn.

Similar to what other researchers and teachers (Jaffer, 1983; Manning, Manning and Huges, 1987; Kreeft, 1983; Whistler, 1984; Sellevaag, 1986; Miccoli, 1987) have found, dialogue journal writing gave students an opportunity to (1) reflect on their own writing activity; (2) to express their ideas, feelings, and complaints; (3) to ask and give suggestions freely; (4) to acquire new patterns and structures in English in a fun way; (5) to be the center or focus of attention in class; and finally, (6) the activity of dialogue journal writing helped build up a certain degree of intimacy between teacher and students which made students become more daring in using the foreign language.

As to the teacher-researcher's part, it could be said that students' interest in participating in the activity fostered motivation for teaching. It is important to stress however, that it depends on the teacher inside the classroom to promote activities and innovations which can lead students to a change of behavior. In the present study although it demanded much more time of the teacher-researcher to read and to answer students' entries than simply to follow a textbook, simply to watch students deeply involved in the task, participating

actively in their process of learning was a great reward. To write in students' journals was hard work, but on the other hand, it was much more enjoyable and human than just correcting "artificial" language exercises based on the textbook as required in traditional EFL classess.

As it happens with any piece of research, the present study also has its limitations.

The first limitation is related to the methodology. The investigation with dialogue journal writing had been planned for one school semester, yet due to a teachers' strike at Colégio de Aplicação, the time was reduced to only three months. This affected the data collecting process. Only half of the number of journals to be collected from each student were actually collected, and this in turn, precluded a more reliable result of the analysis of students' writing progress. Learning is a slow and long process, therefore the longer a process of learning is observed, the clearer the changes can be perceived, and the former conclusions can be drawn from the observations. Thus, in a larger number of journals probably more incidences of one particular phenomenon could have been detected, which would have given this researcher more security in her conclusions.

A second serious limitation of the study is that it doesn't conform entirely to a naturalistic research approach. The data analysis was not performed on the data from the whole group of students that participated in the study, and this reduced the ecological validity of the study. Thus, it is recommended that in a future study of this type or in a replication of this very study the analysis of the data deal with the group as a whole. It

is also recommended that such an investigation be conducted at least over a period of six months, or if possible over an entire school year, so that firmer conclusions can be drawn from the findings.

Dialogue journal writing as a technique to develop writing skills in the foreign language should also be researched with students of other secondary schools in Brazil. Furthermore, dialogue journal writing might also be used to develop writing skills in Portuguese at elementary and secondary school levels, and even in Portuguese remedial writing courses at college level.

Finally, the data obtained for this study is available for further investigations. Other researchers may want to look at them from other points of view, as for example, an analysis of students' errors in English; of students' vocabulary development in English; of students' use of language functions in English; students' choice of topics for writing, and perhaps still other approaches.

APPENDIX 1

Attitudes inventory applied in the beginning and at the end of the research:

Question:

How is your motivation to learn English now?

Beginning		End
Excellent	- 0	3
Very good	- 4	10
Good	- 11	11
Bad	- 9	0
Very bad	- 4	0

Question:

How do you feel when you are asked to write in English?

Beginning		End
Very well	- 3	3
Well	- 8	12
Fairly well	- 12	9
Bad	- 4	0
Very bad	- 1	0

Question:

How is your interest during the English class?

Beginning		End
Excellent	- 0	1
Very good	- 5	12
Good	- 5	10
Bad	- 14	1
Very bad	- 4	0

Question:

How is your motivation to participate in the English classes with the use of the textbook/journals?

Beginning (Book)		End (Journals)
Excellent	- 1	6
Very good	- 3	12
Good	- 12	6
Bad	- 9	0
Very bad	- 2	0

Question:

How do you evaluate the methodology adopted during this period?

Beginnig (Book)		End (Journals)
Very efficient	- 1	9
Efficient	- 2	9
Good	- 5	6
Uninteresting	- 10	0
Bad	- 10	0

Appendix 2

Students' answers regarding the English classes in which only the textbook was used:

"well given, but the method did not help"
"boring with the book"
"uninteresting due to the method adopted"
"the method with the book does not lead to learn but to memorize only"
"monotonous because of the book"
"very bad because of the book"
"the activities were not interesting".
"too much practical - not efficient"
"too much tied to the book always depending on it"
"fairly good"
"boring and tiresome"
"creative - method was boring and monotonous"
"I couldn't learn as I would like to"
"I felt insecure when I was asked to write without the help of the book"
"I felt unsatisfied with the method. It was boring and uninteresting"
"I did not like the book". I felt demotivated and uninterested"
"I felt lost and demotivated"
"I felt bad. I did not like the book"

Appendix 3

Students' comments regarding the written activity in which the journals were used and regarding the English classes where they worked with this activity.

"I felt interested enough to learn"

"I felt better and I am more interested, mainly because of the journals.

"the activities are more interesting now than before"

"I am much more interested in participating now than before"

"I feel more comfortable to write now and my vocabulary improved

"I am more motivated to write in English now. I felt I have learned a little more now"

"I am each time more motivated to write in English"

"I am much more motivated to come to school . I participate a lot more now"

"the classes are better now, I have learned more, I can express myself easier and I have improved my writing"

"I have learned much more writing in the journals than with the exercises in the book"

"I am more interested in writing, my vocabulary has increased".

Appendix 4

Transcription and translation into English of Students' informal interview.

In order to protect students' identity, their names will not be revealed, only a capital letter will be written, instead.

During the interview, students were asked questions such as: "What do you think of the writing activity we are working with? Did you notice you have learned anything because of this activity?; What points do you notice you have learned more specifically? Do you start writing immediately after you receive your journal back or do you need some time to start?

Students' answers were:

O.: "I have found out that English is written with capital letter in the beginning. I noticed that if I review what I have written, I can improve a lot more".

Ti.: "I have found out that it is "tell somebody" instead of "tell for". Writing has been my pass-time. I would like to speak more but I notice that the training in writing is very good. I think that the objective of practice writing has been achieved during this period".

W.: "I think a little before I start writing. The topic comes easily in my mind; the problem is how to put it into English".

B.: "I like writing, and I start writing immediately. The topic comes easily to my mind. Now it is easier to write than it was in the beginning; with the time, it becomes easier and I think it is because of the practice in writing. I do not notice any correction in your entries, but I notice that there is something different."

F.: "I take some time to start writing. I do not have ideas, however, I prefer to choose a topic instead of receiving some of your suggestions. I have noticed that I have improved a little. Also depending on the topic I

am going to write about, it becomes easier or more difficult to write."

Z.: "In the beginnig I had more difficulty in expressing what I wanted to say, but soon I was becomming more confident. I started to see that I could say the same thing in different ways. I think that this writing excercise has helped me in learning English."

E.: "It was difficult to write in English in the beginning. now it is getting better. I am enjoying more and I am feeling more comfortable to write. I have practiced a lot and the fact that you do not suggest a topic it becomes much easier. I think you should emphasize some grammatical points such as pronouns, and verb forms. I have noticed some corrections but I do not know exactly what they are."

Ar.: "I think that this activity helps increase the vocabulary. It is easier to understand your entries now than before. I used to think a lot in the beginning; now it is easier. I think I have gotten more fluency in English with this technique. I became more confident with the practice of writing. I think it is pleasant to speak English at home now. I would like to see more films in English. I think I am learning."

An.: "I have some doubts when I start writing, but the writing exercise is helping me overcome some of those difficulties. It was more difficult to write in the beginning, but now it is easier and this is because the writing activity. I think this is a good activity."

U.: "This activity is wonderful to me. In the beginning I could write three lines only and now I am writing even more. In the beginning I did not have vocabulary and now I have noticed that my vocabulary increased. I do not memorize many things but with the practice I am getting accustomed to writing more. The way you write back helps me perceive what I am not doing right. It helps me because the teacher writes in another way correcting our mistakes and putting other words that I can use the next time I am going to write."

H.: "I have noticed that I am learning to write something. In practice, the more we write the better we learn. I think this technique was wonderful. Now I am more motivated to write than before and I do not have that difficulty to start writing. I have noticed that even the new words are becoming more familiar to me."

Ly.: "I like to write in English. I think this technique helped me. The words did not come easily before but now it is easier. I do not think this exercise is tiresome

and I can write more now."

- Q.: "I am feeling more secure to write now than before. I notice I am improving. The sentences come more easily to my mind and I think it is because of the practice in writing. I have noticed some corrections when you write back; for example, I noticed that we say "to save" and not "for save". I understand better the future with will."
- J.: "This is a very good activity because I like to write and I have noticed that my vocabulary is improving. I notice your corrections when I am going to write again. Before the journals it was boring when I had to write because I had no stimulus and I did not know what to write about; but now it is better because I know what to write about."
- V.: "Sometimes the words do not come easy and I do not feel at ease to ask you all the time. I was afraid to write many things in a wrong way and I thought you would think I was ridiculous. My father also thinks I am very shy. Now I feel more comfortable to write and I start to write immediately after you give my journal back because I want to answer what you have asked me."

Appendix 5

Students' answers to the formal interview question:

Ti.: " OK Bete;

Actually I liked to write in this diary very much. First, because we are practicing our writing. Second, because you answer all of us. Third, because I love to write in diaries. That's my opinion.

Hey, Bete, the only problem for me is your way of correction: you could tell for your students when answering, for instances: "Dear Fulano, you wrote "correctd", but the right is "corrected". but if it's difficult for you, at least write it in my compositions.

I want to write in English correctly that's why I would like to have corrections in my diary. OK?

Well, I have a terrible headache today, that's why I'll not write many things for you. Bye"

E.: "Hi, Beti?! How are you?

I'm fine.

About the journals, I think they don't have any problem. I like very much to write in them. but I think it's important you don't give topics for us. I can write in my journal something that I want. If you don't give me a topic, I can write free. The work sounds much better than making exercises everyday. I think I'm growing up in the English.

Kisses,
E."

Ly.: "Dear Beti

I think this activity has been very, very, very good to me.

First because writing I am learning more and more surely.

Second because the classes has been different and they aren't always the same, it's very interesting.

Other good point is that we can write about anything we want, so, we can to express our feelings and I can open myself up, talking about good or bad things, happy or sad incidents or thoughts that are in my mind.

In this moment I can't remember bad points about this activity.

Really I think it's wonderful!

Kisses,

Ly."

* Sorry for the letter and mistakes!

Bye"

H.: "Dear Teacher,

I didn't do anything that I dislike in this activity.

Perhaps on the beginning I was frightened to write wrong. Now, I know that I write wrong, too. And sometimes I feel it but now I'm free to write my ideas. I dislike the moments when I have no ideas to write but they're disappearing with the time.

This activity it makes me write better with more fluence.

And I have a novelty for you. My particular English School director tells me that I'm one of the bests students in the school because I have a big fluence to write and speack.

To speack I learned with them, but to write I learned with you and he invited me to begun to teach at the school next year, after the exercise.

Isn't it marvelous?

I'm very happy.

Kisses,

H."

Z.: " The "journal" is a new and interesting activity for us. With this we can improve our writing without preoccupation with the grade. I think that it is a good opportunity to write better, principally because we write about what we wanted to. The correction is another good point. The "red pen" didn't work in this activity, so we could learn the correct form of the words by ourselves, with a "little help" of the teacher's answers. Talking about me, now I'm really writing better than in the beginning of the year. It was a good experience."

B.: "I liked the "Dialogue Journal Writing" very much. I think that it is very good for our witing. All points of journal are interesting. But, I think that you should tell us some idea for the "Dialogue Journal Writing".

I think that you should keep on with the "Dialogue Journal Writing" because it's great. I feel very good during this time of journal. I believe that I learned very much in this time."

An.: "I like all the things from the Journal but sometimes I don't have subjects.

I think you could correct us; you can "dar um toque" in somethings. For example you can say: - "Take care with this point and this other".

I know that you try to correct us writing what we write again, but sometimes it's difficult to find the mistake.

Once I started to write I think that I'm improving and I hope to improve until the end of the year.

An".

J.: " Dear Beti,

I think that this Journal is helping me a lot. I can write more after started to do this activity.

I like this because we can write about a lot of different things. We can tell you secrets things that you don't tell to other people. We can listen to yours advise, to your opinion about some question. It's so interesting because we can open ourselves up with you and at the same time we can learn to write.

I also think that this activity don't have dislikes, mainly because I don't do this every classes.

I love this. I'am learning so much with it.

Kisses,

J."

H.: " Dear Beti,

About we are working with the "Dialogue Journal Writing", I think the idea is very interesting, because, make us think, and this is very very good for we. I don't have for dislikes, only likes. For me it's very good. I learned lot of things since we started.

H."

O.: "Beth,

some time I want to write a lot. But some times I'm down and I don't want to write. Some day I'm not inspired. This activity it's very important but some time the words don't come easily. To write in the "Dialogue Journal Writing" need to have a big criativity and need to pay attention. This "Journal" it's an exercice. It's very important to me.

Kisses,

O."

U.: "Dear Bete,

I like this activity complitely. Don't have points I dislike, because this activity it's good for me, I understand English very best. This activity is very good and I like it's totaly. It's a exercise for we and isn't boring, it's relax as our classes.

You're welcome,

U."

Q.: I not dislike anything in this activity, I have only points for this activity (The journal), one this points it's I was to get security without the English book, because I felt very tied with the English book, and today I've been loosing this problem it was because this activity."

F.: "About activity of Journal, I think that it was very good. The Journal it was an activity that all students liked. All, wrote with freedon.
This is my opinion"

V.: "Dear Beti,

I like all thinks in journal, for example: it's very important for a write, even for a speak, because you correct our wrongs and then we speaking and writing the right. I like write but I don't have idea, subjects and so I like when you ask me.

I never work with this activity but I like very much.

Kisses, V."

W.: " Dear Beti,

I like this activity sometimes but this activity is tiresome. But sometimes this activity is interesting.
The only problem is that I don't have idea to write!
You understand me?

This activity is interesting because I open myself up with you.

Is that OK?

Kisses.

W."

Appendix 6

First entry in students' dialogue journal writing.

Dear,

Dialogue Journal Writing is a very special type of writing activity. It helps you to learn to think and write in English. Every week you will write for 20 minutes. I will collect your journals at the end of class, write back to you, and give you your journal at the beginning of the class the next week.

Here are some things to remember:

1. Please include the date each time you write.
2. Please use blue pen and write on one side of the paper only.
3. Your journal is confidential, i.e., I will not show or tell anyone what you write.
4. You can write about anything you like. You can criticize give suggestions, ask questions, and so on.
5. I will not grade or judge you for what you write.
6. Feel free to write.

Appendix.7

Students' entries where interaction occurred mainly through asking questions:

Ti.: "Hello, Teacher,

how are you? I'm OK; but this month I am happier, because I'll be 15 years old the 20th. My friends say to me that this date is unforgettable; so ... What about you? Do you remember yours 15's? I hope this date was very nice for you.

Well, Bete, I don't know if you are going to have time to answer; anyway I am going to wait for your answer.

Your student,

Ti."

H.: "Dear Beti,

I would like to know, you had to difficult to learn a English. Why do you chose this is a language? Do you like other languages? You had interested for learn to other languages? I'd like to know "mesmo". OK?

H."

Teacher: "Dear H.,

"Yes, I really had some difficulty in learning English because it is very different from Portuguese. I have chosen this language because to me English is a very beautiful language and also because I wanted to understand many English songs which I liked very much. How about you? Do you like English? "

H.: "I like English because it's very beautiful and it's very important with my studies and travelling.

I think learn English then speak English, but if you don't try you don't "conseguir". Am I right or wrong?

I like others language, Spanish and French, but for me is very important a English."

U.: " Dear Bete,

I'm so very happy, because I get a one party in my

house sunday "passado"(?). It was very good ...

My new Maths teacher, I understand her but she's very boring with me. Is a pity because I like her It's ok! ! !

Know we are in finish year and the vacation are near ... It's good ...

U."

Teacher: "Dear U.,

How nice you gave a party at your house last Sunday.

Finally you got a new Math teacher, and you said she is boring. Why? What does she do that you don't like? We still have two months before the end of classes and it will be good for you if you can get along well with your Math teacher. I am sure your vacation will be much better after that. Don't you think so?

Beti"

U.: "Bete,

I think so, but I don't like her, well... will try ... OK? (I'm going it's well in this subject) .

I like very much last class: "The English Alphabet" but I don't know "sing the song".

I'd like you give more musics (By the way...), I love it !!! OK?

Appendix 8

REGISTER 1
DATE: Sep 5/1989

This was the first day of the "Dialogue Journal Writing". As soon as the bell rang, I went to my classroom, called the roll and started the class. Before asking the students to write in their diaries, I explained to them what the objective of that class was and how that activity should be conducted. Some students asked questions regarding to evaluation of that activity. I explained that they would not be graded for that and after answering two other questions, I handed in their diaries (which I had collected during some previous classes in order to write the first entry) with my first entry. All of them read it with attention and after some time, they started to write. While they were writing in their journals there was too much noise outside; then, I closed the door and it became better. At the beginning, An., H. and W. told me they were not inspired to write. I told them that they could write about the lack of inspiration; and soon they started to write. Ar., Z., and B. asked me questions about vocabulary (in Portuguese). Ti., however, asked me a question about vocabulary in English. All the questions were about language. Most of the students asked each other questions of all kinds while they were writing. All of them except one, took more than twenty minutes to write. Only two complained about the lack of ideas to write. When the bell rang again for the next class, there were still four of them writing; but soon they finished and gave me back their diaries. This was what happened during their first writing.

REGISTER No 2

DATE: Sep. 19/1989

This is the second time of the dialogue journal writing. Students could not write last week because they had "Olimpic Games" in their school. Today, however, all of the students wrote and there were more questions than the first time. Students needed to know about the new words in order to write. All of the students read what I had written to them; and most of them started writing immediatelly. Some of them came to me and asked me about the meaning of the words I had used in their answers; others asked their friends for clarification. There are three students in this class who had been to USA or England for some years; so they help their classmates when they are asked to. Everybody wrote on free topics and nine of the students took more than 20 minutes to write. however, there was enough time for everybody to finish their writings. There was silence outside, which helped students concentrate on their writings. Nothing else happened today that must be registered here.

REGISTER No 3
DATE: Sep. 26/1989

This is the third time students write in their dialogue journal writing. Before writing, I called students' attention to the meaning of some linking words such as: however, and, and so. Soon after that, I gave them back their diaries so that they could have enough time to read and write back. During their writings, Z. and Ly. asked me some questions in Portuguese. However, the questions were related to their task. Ti. asked me one question in English, and her question was well formulated. She said: "What's the meaning of maybe"? I answered and then she started writing. One thing that called my attention was the fact that when students do not know what to write about, they start talking to each other and later they start writing. This happened to J., W., and U. Another student started talking to me about things not pertinent to the task. When I noticed it, I asked her to write in her diary. Then she said she did not have anything to write about; but soon she started. Most of them took 20 minutes to write and this time few students took more than 20 minutes. Nothing else happened today that I have observed to register here.

REGISTER No 4

DATE: Oct. 3/1989

Today students were noisy for no apparent reason. After calling the roll, I played a game about the English alphabet which had been the subject studied last class and after that, I gave them their diaries back so that they could read and write. At first, A. did not know what to write. She has shown some difficulties in starting to write. J. started playing, so I talked to him in English to stop playing and he answered to me in English, too. Now I have noticed that he did not hand in his diary. I hope he brings it back next class. Ar., E., and An. asked questions concerning vocabulary. W. and O. were writing together and sharing ideas. Ar., E. and An. took less than 20 minutes to write. H., V., An., Q., and O. took about 20 minutes to finish their writings. However, all of them except J., handed in their journals before the end of class. Nothing else happened today that I have perceived.

REGISTER No 5

DATE: Oct.17, 1989

After calling the roll, I explained some points students needed to know such as the difference between like and as; the use of some linking words such as however, moreover, and, but, because and that's why. Ar. asked me about some words to start sentences such as so and thus. After that, I gave them their diaries back so that they could read my answers and ask about their doubts. An. and F. asked me about the meaning of some new vocabulary I had used in answer to their writings. F. asked me questions in English which I answered in English, too. After solving most of the questions, some students started writing immediately. Some of them asked me questions concerning vocabulary which I answered and sometimes wrote on the blackboard. One student F. considered poor, asked me a question in English and when I was going to write the word on the blackboard he told me in English that he knew how to write it. Students were very concentrated today. Two students An. and Ti. asked questions of another classmate who had been living in the USA. He helped them and sometimes he asked me for confirmation. One student, kept his diary last class and forgot to bring it to this class; so I asked him to write on a sheet of paper today. Most of them finished writing on time; that is, they finished writing in 20 minutes. Some of them took less than 20 minutes (Ti., U., J., F., H., Q., and E.). All of them wrote in their diaries without complaining. One thing that called my attention was the fact that these students did not have English classes last week because of the "Conselho de Classe", and maybe that is the reason why they were all so concentrated today.

REGISTER No 6

DATE: Oct. 26/1989

Today the whole class was very noisy. Students were talking too much that I almost could not call the roll. However, after some time, I could do it and soon I started class telling them that they should read a text I had given them last class so that they would write a composition next class which I will grade because they must have a grade for the fourth bimester. While I was explaining some points about vocabulary in that text, one student asked me if they were not going to write in their diaries today. As I could observe, this student wanted to write rather than read the text for next class. Although they were very agitated today, as soon as I gave them back their diaries, they all became quiet and I thought it was only while they were reading what I had written ; but to my surprise, all of them started writing almost immediately. Only three of them didn't, because they were in doubt about the meaning of some new words I had used in their answers. An., U., Q., Ti., and Ly. asked me questions related to the task and the new vocabulary they wanted to use. B. and J. asked another classmate who had been to the USA for the meaning of some words. Some of them asked each other questions while they were writing. Today, 8 students took less than 20 minutes to write ; 4 took about 20 minutes , and only three took more than 20 minutes to write. They did not asked me many questions today. And I had to write only three words on the blackboard. The other words, students knew how to write. Students were calmer at the end of class today.

REGISTER No 7

DATE: november 7,1989

Today, as I entered the classroom students asked me whether I had brought the song I had promised. I said no because the recording wasn't good and I had to record it again. So I promised to bring it next class. Then, another student asked me for the diaries. I said yes, and she showed satisfaction in knowing she was going to write. After calling the role, I gave them their diaries but I told them that they were going to answer the question I had asked all of them about the activity of the dialogue journal writing. At this point of the research I need some feedback from them. In fact, some of them showed they were waiting for my answers to their writings which I told them I would do next time. After receiving their diaries, and without asking any no questions about the specific question all students started writing. After some time, Ti., An., V., B., E., asked me questions related to vocabulary. Z. kept asking J. who had lived in the States questions about vocabulary. This time, students almost did not talk to each other, except the one I mentioned before. They were all very concentrated on their writings, and all of them handed in their diaries before the bell rang for the next class.

REGISTER No 8

DATE: November 14, 1898

Today students were very excited because of the elections for president tomorrow. They almost couldn't stop talking to each other. So, I told them I was in doubt about whom I should vote for and all of them wanted to suggest their candidates. Then, I said it was very difficult for me to accept all the suggestions and I would like them to write in their diaries their arguments and suggestions. None of them complained, and as they wanted to sing the song I had promised, everybody wrote within the 20 minutes established. Everybody asked me questions concerning vocabulary mainly those related to elections. They were very interested and concentrated today. I noticed that they almost did not ask each other questions. On the other hand, I was almost crazy trying to answer all of their questions.

REGISTER No 9

DATE: Nov 21, 1989

Students look tired this time of the year, showing little motivation to study. However, I asked them today to re-read every entry they had written as well as my answers to see whether they could recognize any indirect correction or anything that called their attention in terms of form or function. Meanwhile, I took the tape recorder and started interviewing most of them. I asked them to give their opinion about this activity. In general all of them told me they find this activity valid and motivating because they can perceive their improvement in the language, they lost the fear to write, and for some of them even to speak. Students wrote in their diaries with concentration. Some did not write because they said they were tired. There were very few questions concerning vocabulary and ideas.

REGISTER No.10
Date: Nov.28

Today was the last day of classes and the students were very tired because they had many tests during this week. I told them that today they would be writing in their diaries for the last time this year and some of them asked me to continue with this activity next year. I told them that if I am going to be their teacher, I will probably continue with this activity. However this is something I do not know yet. As soon as they received their diaries back, and after reading what I had written the time before, all of them started writing immediately. Nobody asked me any questions about what I had written and I suppose they understood everything. Soon they started asking me questions not only about the vocabulary they wanted to apply, but also about new forms of structures concerning ideas they wanted to use in their writings. This time, I observed L. looking for the word "should" in my writings in order to use it in his entry. All of them finished in time and today I had asked them to answer an attitudes inventory (the same they had answered in the beginning of the research); so I did not call the roll in the beginning of class and started with the journals immediately.

Appendix 9

Students entries using the functions of suggesting, accepting
suggestion, justification, complaining and answering questions:

"Q":

"Teacher I think your should ask suggestions for the students for the next music, for working in class, because I've been upset in english classes and I think that one new music would cheer up the next english classes."

Teacher: "Dear Q.,

I see that you are not feeling well in our English classes, and there must be a reason for that.

Let's see if everybody accepts your suggestion of singing a new song next classes, OK? And if everybody accepts it, will you bring the song to us next class? Meanwhile, why don't you write about the things you like in our class or outside the class? It is only a suggestion OK?"

"Q"

"I think so, It's only a suggestion, because I have many tests and homeworks and I didn't have time to think in another suggestions. I promise give another suggestions for the English classes in another hour, now it's impossible."

V.: "Dear Teacher,

Do you remember when I spoke about my uncle, he was operated and he's fine but unfortunately he died early in the morning friday. On Saturday I was upset but now I'm fine because today today I don't have Fisical test because the teacher not go to the school.

I study the morning and he didn't go....

I can't walk easily yet but I'll get.

Kisses,

V."

Teacher: "Dear V.,

I am sorry about your uncle's death. As you said, he was fine but unfortunately he died on Friday morning. I can imagine how you are feeling about his death.

V., can you tell me why students are so happy when teachers cannot come to class? By the way, is Physics a very difficult subject for you? What subjects do you like? And do you study everyday or only when you have tests?

I will be very glad if you can answer my questions
OK?

Kisses,

Beti"

V.: "Dear Beti,

First I answer your questions, OK? The first question I don't know why the students are happy when the teachers can not come to class; Phisycs is a little difficult for me but it's a good subject.

The subjects I'm not like are History and "Filosofia". Sometimes I study only when I have test, I think it's easier because "lembra mais"; but it's important to study everyday "para aprender mais".

I hope the new president will help the education, because the education in Brasil is bad. I hope it get better."

An.: "This week will be very tired because I have tests all the days.

Today I'm very tired because I Should've phisycs test but our teacher didn't come, and I hadn't study for the test.

What motivates me is that the year is finishing and I think I'll pass the year without taking finally exams."

Teacher: "Dear An,

I see that you like when teachers cannot come to class. Why is that? Is it because of the teachers or because of the tests? I think it is because of the tests. Nobody likes taking tests especially every month. And how about Physics?

However, that is our Brazilian system of evaluating students and many teachers cannot find another way of assessing their students.

Do you think tests are necessary to make students learn? In your opinion, what other ways must students be

assessed?

An.:

"Sometimes we are tired of our classes, and besides I don't like Physics very much.

In some subjects is difficult to asses without tests, for example Physics and Math, and moreover I think that it is easy if we do tests.

However, in the other subjects the teachers can asses us in the other way, I think without tests is a good way.

But to change the evaluating from a school is necessary a lot of studies, and my mother told me that they are trying to change our evaluating.

Let's see if it is going to be all right, and the asception from the students."

Teacher: " Dear An,

I think you are right. You have to pay a lot of attention to Physics to understand it and find it an easy subject. And not only Physics but all the other subjects, too.

Yes, I also think that sometimes it is easier to take tests rather than being evaluated through other ways. Also, it is easier for some students to take tests because they are accostumed to them. Don't you think so?

On the other hand, it is not easy for the teachers to asses students differently, but we should try.

About students' acceptance, we must ask them for suggestions. However, as your mother said, it takes a lot of time and work. Nevertheless, I hope we can change the evaluation system of our schools within the next years."

"An"

" Today, I had a terrible headache, and Im very tired.

Lately I've had terribles headache, and I think it's because I need to use glass.

Some months ago I went to an optician and he said that I don't need to use glass, but I will go to another one to see what he say and I think it will be good if I take some exams.

I hope it won't be nothing serious."

E.: "Hi? How are you? I'm fine, much better than the week before last one.

I'm so surprised because I discovered you have two dogs!

I like cats but my father doesn't want to "criar" them. Some cats, like "angora" and "siames", are very beautiful.

I love these animals: tigers, lions, rabbits, eagles, dogs, monkeys, ducks, etc... But it is difficult to take care of lions or tigers. If i'd have a farm, I would have ducks, horses, cows, etc...

Kisses,

E."

Teacher: " Dear E.,

I am feeling much better this week than the last one because I could organize myself and prepare all my classes.

It is a pity that your father doesn't want you to raise cats. They are so lovely and beautiful, but he must have his own reasons which I think you should respect. I have two cats and I love them, too. Don't worry, when you grow up and have your own farm, you can raise all types of animals you like, OK?

Kisses,

Beti".

E.: "I'm so fine, in spite of the tests and tiring. Teacher, may I call you Beti? I'm asking because I don't know.

I would like very much if I have a very big farm. There, I'd raise all types of animals, the same you said.

Beti, why doesn't our country have the same rights as the others? I'D like to understand this. Do you understand? I want to change this country, but how? I'm so confused.

Kisses,

E".

APPENDIX 10

Example of a student's card to register the development of writing.

WHAT TO OBSERVE DURING THE RESEARCH

NAME: "W"

DATE:	Sep. 5	Sep. 19	Sep. 26	Oct. 3	Oct. 17	Oct. 26	Nov. 7	Nov. 14	Nov. 21	Nov. 28
CONTENT:										
Clarity:	fair	clear	clear	good	good	OK	OK	OK	OK	OK
Organization:	OK	good	y/n	good	y/n	y/n	good	good	good	good
Use of types of sentences										
a) simple:	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
b) complex:	yes	yes	y/n	y/n	yes	y/n	yes	yes	yes	yes
Use of linking words:	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Use of new words:	no	no	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Correct use of verb tenses:	no	yes	yes	yes	y/n	yes	y/n	y/n	yes	yes
Correct use 3rd. person singular	no	no	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
correct use of pronouns:	y/n	y/n	yes	yes	yes	yes	y/n	yes	yes	yes
Correct use of plurals:	y/n	y/n	y/n	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Correct use of articles:										
a) definite:	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
B) indefinite:	no	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

Obs: _____

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